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Scar's Warning - Prologue

Thank you @warriorcatlover511 I dont even know why Im thanking you, but Im gonna dedicate ya to this cuz I really liked the zombie warrior cat fan fic you made! :3 :D

Thanks @Pastel_Ice for the awesome cover!

August 16th, 2017: I'm thoroughly editing this. I see many comments about mistakes and such, and since my other book Bloodshed: Shadows is coming to an end, I figured lets fix it!

_____-

Prologue ~

The sun shone brightly over the camp. Patrols came back with their jaws full of mouth-watering fresh-kill. Kits played around, diving for each other and chasing warriors. Elders basked in the warm, welcoming sun while the leader purred with his mate, speaking of how his deputy talked so much he once tripped and fell into a bush full of thorns. Everyone was happy in the daylight of greenleaf. But the one thing they didn't know, was something much darker than they've all ever come across is coming. Quicker than anyone ever thought.

_____

A moaning sound came from outside of Scar's den. He was a fluffy, elderly loner in Twolegplace. Usually, no cat bothered him. *What is that noise?* He thought, blinking open his eyes.

Padding out of his cozy, Twoleg-made nest, he was welcomed by a bloody cat standing awkwardly a few tail-lengths away. The fur on his body was ripped off, blood dripping from a massive gash in its side. It looked like it was a bite mark. A Twoleg bite mark.

Scar wearily stalked toward the injured, moaning cat. "Hello? Are

you alright?" Scar mewed to the mysterious cat, his tail trembling. His gut told him to run and hide. Scar jumped as the sound of a monster on the Thunderpath not far from his den crashed into something and a screech followed after it, loud moaning and growls echoing among the Twolegplace. Gulping, Scar stepped closer.

What's going on? Whats with all the moaning? His heartbeat thumped faster than a monster could ever run as he poked the cats bald flank from behind it. The cat whipped around and let out a ferocious growl, its jaws dripping with saliva and blood. Scar backed away from it, suddenly terrified and feeling helpless, toward the fence as it stumbled toward him.

Its eyes were milky and frosted over as if it were blind or even dead. Spit drooled out of its bloody mouth as it opened its jaw. It extended its neck toward him and snapped it closed when Scar hopped backwards. "What are you doing? Go away!" Scar screeched, slashing weakly at the face of the cat. It barely budged, stumbling closer.

Scar climbed some wooden boxes that were piled near the fence and stood on top. Looking down on the cat, he sat. But the bloody, monstrous cat didn't stop there.

The cat groaned as it slowly climbed the boxes, scratching at the high climb. *The Clans will know what's going on!* Scar decided and just as the strange cat fell again, he leaped off of the fence and ran through the dense forest. Bushes and branches whipped his face as he dashed through the forest, but he didn't care to dodge any of them. With the sun blazing above, the forest was much more alive and less frightening than it was at night.

SpiritClan's territory border passed by several heartbeats ago, but that didn't stop him. He needed to get to the nearest Clan! All three of the Clans knew him but didn't try to chase him out. He was the friendly loner that visited every now and again.

There were three Clans that were known there. The forest was owned by SpiritClan. The moor was owned by LightClan and the pines and marsh were owned by DarkClan. All three didn't like each other but respected them as cats. Barely any battles happened

between the Clans, which was good in Scars' perspective.

Scar rushed into SpiritClan's camp and every cat looked up. "Reedstar." Scar panted, sitting down. His vision seemed to be getting darker from running. Being elderly, he knew he shouldn't be running that far. "What are you doing in my camp, Scar? You know the agreement." Reedstar growled stepping away from his expecting mate, Birdfeather.

"Reedstar. Something is happening in Twolegplace. I woke up to a cat moaning with a gash like a Twoleg bite in his side. I poked him to ask if he was alright and his eyes were white like he was blind or dead and he tried to *eat* me." Scar explained, taking a few huge breaths when he had finished.

Reedstar rolled his eyes. "Scar. Stop. I know you like to do pranks but not now. We are celebrating the sun-" Reedstar began and Scar stopped him, eyes narrowed and tail lashing. "I may not be a part of this Clan - or any Clan - but you have to believe me. This cat was supposed to be *dead* a-and it tried to *eat* me." Scar puffed but Reedstar whipped his tail at him.

"Enough. Leave my camp, now."

He has to believe me! "Reedstar. Please, come with me to see it. I promise on the life of every cat in this camp that it is *not* a prank!" Scar reasoned and Reedstar turned to his deputy, Cloudjaw. He only shrugged.

"Fine. Cloudjaw, keep the Clan in order while I'm gone." Reedstar meowed, turning back to Scar's frightened expression. "I won't be long." He muttered.

Reedstar padded beside Scar, mouth a straight line and eyes narrowed. His brown and black pelt shone in the bright light through the trees. "Hurry." Scar murmured, picking up his pace. The leader grunted.

Reedstar followed at a quick pace behind him as they neared the fence silently. The moaning seemed stronger now. Hopping up onto the fence, he tried not to jump back down as Scar spotted three

more cats beside the cat who had tried to attack Scar.

One cat was lying on the ground while another mauled on it. Scar suddenly remembered some of them. Kay was the one without an eye and half of her face. She clawed at the fence, seeming to be desperate for the cat above. Scar's buddy, Raccoon, was missing half of his body weight and tail. His tail once ringed, now bloody.

The one laying on the ground being eaten was Alligator. No one knew what his name meant but him. Patched evenly with black over grey, his eyes were open wide. But for the rest, Scar couldn't pin-point any names.

Reedstar gasped as he climbed up, pulling Scar from his thoughts.

"What kind of joke is this? Who are these cats?" Reedstar hissed, turning to Scar in bewilderment.

"Alligator is the one being eaten, Kay is the one without a face and Raccoon is the one missing the meat on his side. He was once fat." He croaked. A ball of emotion was caught in his throat. These three were once his friends, thought of as kin.

Reedstar gave Scar a furious glare as if he were making this up. Scar's fur bristled up, startled that the leader still didn't believe him. "Do you think I'm making this up?" He yelled, "Those... *things* were my friends, I thought of them as my kin, and you think I'm *joking* about this?"

Reedstar hissed at him, eyes narrowed to slits. "Nothing this crazy and stupid could *ever* happen! I can't believe-" He began to rant but his speech was cut short as the fence creaked and swayed violently. The two cats that weren't clawing at the fence had joined the raid and were now pushing at it.

The fence had been weakened the last moon by rain and now the two cats were going to end up paying for it. The wood creaked and swayed as the six cats batted on the fence, growling and moaning in hunger.

Both cats were thrown off of the fence as it came tumbling down.

Scar's leg made a deafening crunching sound as the fence landed on his leg awkwardly. Scar let out a screech, more out of fright than pain.

When Scar looked up, expecting to see the leader grab his scruff or try to pick up the fence, he watched Reedstar rush into the forest.

"Reedstar!" Scar yowled. He watched desperately as the SpiritClan leader dashed away in terror. Scar dug his paws into the ground and tried to pull himself out from the fence, but before he could even take in the pain in his leg, more pain brought him into shock as the flesh-eating, glassy-eyed cats began to maul on him.

"No! *Help*!" Scar screamed at the top of his lungs as the cats began to tear at his flesh, opening his stomach with their yellow fangs and blood-stained claws and eating him raw. Scar shrieked as loudly as he could but no one came. Without even a glance over his shoulder, Reedstar was gone.

Scar's scream was cut short as his world blacked out. The cats around him ripped him apart and ate everything until there was nothing left.

*****

A/N:

We're at 10 000 reads guys!! Thanks so much! Make sure to vote!

The Cats

SpiritClan

Leader~
Reedstar - Black with brown paws, yellow eyes, tom.

Deputy~
Cloudjaw - Fluffly white pelt, amber eyes, tom.

Medicine Cat~
Poppyheart - Tortoiseshell, white muzzle and chest, blue eyes, she-cat.

Warriors~
Whitetooth - White with grey muzzle and paws, Cloudjaw's brother, light yellow eyes, tom. Apprentice; Blackpaw
Skyclaw - Grey with one white leg, blue eyes, she-cat.
Feathernose - Light grey with white paws, muzzle and chest, Lionroar's mate, green eyes, she-cat.
Berryfur - dark tortoiseshell, Skyclaw, Poppyheart, Feathernose's brother, blue eyes, tom.
Oceantail - Light grey, black paws and tail tip, Bluewave's sister, hazel eyes, she-cat.
Bluewave - Blue with black legs, yellow eyes, she-cat.
Brackenpelt - Brown with dark brown, Blackpaw's father, yellow eyes, tom. Apprentice; Magmapaw
Lionroar - Orange tabby, white paws, Rockpaw and Magmapaw's father, yellow eyes, tom.
Flamescar - Dark orange, Lionroar's mother, light blue eyes, she-cat. Apprentice; Rockpaw

Apprentices~
Blackpaw - Brown with black paws and tail tip, yellow eyes, tom.
Magmapaw - Orange with white paws and golden eyes, she-cat.
Rockpaw - Dark grey, one blue eye one green, tom.

Queens~

Birdfeather - Black with a grey paws, light green eyes, she-cat. Expecting.

Elders~
Snakewhip - Light grey with white paws and chest, amber eyes, Cloudjaw and Whitetooth's father, tom.
Whiskerfoot - Grey with black paws, Berryfur, Feathernose, Skyclaw and Poppyheart's mother, blue eyes, she-cat.

DarkClan

Leader~
Leopardstar - Light orange with black spots, green eyes, she-cat.

Deputy~
Darkheart - Black with silver chest and tail tip, light blue eyes, tom. Apprentice; Birchpaw

Medicine Cat~
Pebblefur - Black with grey spots, Darkheart's sister, blue eyes, she-cat.
Apprentice - Timberpaw - Brown fur with green eyes, tom.

Warriors~
Boldfang - Black with a white muzzle, dark amber eyes, tom.
Tigerface - Light brown tabby, dark yellow eyes, tom. Apprentice; Leafpaw
Hawkfur - Brown tabby, yellow eyes, tom. Apprentice; Thrushpaw
Venomsoul - Dark grey with grey stomach, pale green eyes, tom.
Dawnclaw - Light grey with one white paw and tail tip, Ivypaw and Thrushpaw's mother, dark green eyes, she-cat. Apprentice; Sharppaw
Heatherleg - Tall light brown, Dawnclaw and Venomsoul's sister and Birchpaw, Timberpaw and Leafpaw's mother, green eyes, she-cat. Apprentice; Ivypaw

Apprentices~
Sharppaw - White with grey paws and chest, fluffy tail, dark blue eyes, tom.

Leafpaw - Brown tabby, Birchpaw's sister, light yellow eyes, she-cat.
Birchpaw - Light brown cat with white stripes, light green eyes, tom.
Timberpaw - Brown fur with green eyes, tom.
Ivypaw - Light grey tabby, Timberpaw and Thrushpaw's sister, pale blue eyes, she-cat.
Thrushpaw - Grey with white legs and muzzle, dark blue eyes, tom.

Queens~
Ambersun - Golden with white paws, amber eyes, she-cat.
Horizonkit, light orange, yellow eyes, tom. Sunkit, golden fur, white paws with amber eyes, she-kit.

Elders~
Loudstep - Huge white paws, tanned colored fur, green eyes, tom.
Blizzardwind - Black with white patches, light blue eyes, she-cat.
Mousefoot - Brown with one black paw, Heatherleg, Venomsoul and Dawnclaw's father, pale yellow eyes, tom.

LightClan

Leader~
Crystalstar - White with light green eyes, Lilypatch's sister and Ratstripe's mate, she-cat. (Bared the kits when she was a warrior)

Deputy~
Lilypatch - Grey with white tail tip, chest and muzzle, blue eyes, she-cat.

Medicine Cat~
Redfur - Dark orange with white paws and tail tip, light amber eyes, tom.

Warriors~
Viperslash - Dark grey tabby, yellow eyes, tom. Apprentice; Spikepaw
Ratstripe - Dark brown tabby, Spikepaw, Deerpaw and Mudpaw's father, blue eyes, tom.
Mistytail - Fluffy grey pelt with white hind legs, Ashclaw and

Raincloud's sister, light green eyes, she-cat. Apprentice; Snowpaw
Raincloud - Light grey with grey spots, ringed tail, Lighteningice's mate, green eyes, tom.
Ashclaw - Grey tabby, dark green eyes, tom. Apprentice; Mudpaw
Bumblesting - Grey with white stripes, white stomach and tail tip, Snowpaw's father, tom.
Squirreltail - Dark orange with white paws, Redfur's sister, amber eyes, she-cat. Apprentice; Deerpaw

Apprentices~
Snowpaw - White with purple eyes, she-cat.
Spikepaw - Light brown with unusually long claws, green eyes, tom.
Deerpaw - Light brown with white spots on flank, white paws and tail tip, blue eyes, she-cat.
Mudpaw - Dark brown with dark blue eyes, tom.

Queens~
Lighteningice; White with yellow eyes, she-cat - Patchkit; White with one grey spot around left eye, yellow eyes, she-kit. Stormkit; Grey with white paws, yellow eyes, tom. Sootkit; light grey with white ears and stomach, green eyes, tom.

Elders~
Robinfeather - Black with grey front paws and chest, broken leg (had to move into the elders den early), pale blue eyes, she-cat.
Jaguarspot - Brown with black spots and stomach, amber eyes, tom.

Chapter 1

I pounded away from the scene as Scar was torn apart. His screams echoed into the forest as I dashed away. *I can't let myself get killed, I have a duty. I'll warn the Clan and the other Clans but that's it. I only have 4 lives left.* I thought as I raced away from his screams. Suddenly, they stopped. *He must be out of his misery.* I thought. I didn't dare look behind me.

I slowed down as my camp came into view. *I can't make them panic. What do I tell them? I'll say Scar went to his nest. Wait... what about the flesh-eating cats?*

"Reedstar, where's Scar?" Whitetooth asked. His patrol of four - Whitetooth and Flamescar and their apprentices, Blackpaw and Rockpaw - must've caught up with me. My eyes darted around while I tried to hide my anxiousness and think of a reason suitable for what was going on.

"I sent him home." I murmured, trotting into camp. "Why? Was it a prank?" Rockpaw asked, coming in beside me. "No, but it was something... minor. Everything's fine. He's old and he's... seeing things..." I growled quickly, hoping they'd believe me.

It seemed good enough because no one asked anymore questions. "Reedstar." Poppyheart's voice panted behind me and I spun around. "What?" I mewed. *She looks more tired then ever... What's going on?*

"It's Magmapaw, Brackenpelt and Oceantail. When they came back this morning from Twolegplace, Magmapaw came to me with a bite. She's been coughing up blood ever since. Same with Brackenpelt but Oceantail seems to be fine. I can't seem to get them to stop with anything!" She exclaimed. I gave her a bewildered look and followed her into the den.

"I tried to give them poppy seeds several times, but they keep coughing them up!" Poppyheart's whisper in the medicine den was desperate and I shrugged with wide eyes, "I'm not a medicine cat! I

don't know! You'll have to come with me to see DarkClan and LightClan. Something's up in Twolegplace." I hissed and Poppyheart opened her mouth to reply, eyes glistening with confusion, but Magmapaw started to heave again. She hurried to tend to the young apprentice.

"Let me see her!" Lionroar wailed from outside. "I can't let him see her like this, Reedstar. He won't take my reassurance, please, go tell him she's fine while I try to stop her from heaving," Poppyheart mewed and I nodded. Magmapaw made a moaning sound and I looked over my shoulder. *Is she going to turn into one of them?*

"Reedstar, move." Lionroar hissed, fur fluffed up. Cloudjaw and Whitetooth were trying to hold him back. "No. Magmapaw is alright, trust me. She's sleeping now and she doesn't need anyone bothering her." Lionroar didn't seem to believe me, but reluctantly, the large warrior backed away.

All of a sudden, Lionroar shoved me out of the way and disappeared into the medicine den.

I stumbled from the blow and fell backwards. Quickly, I got up and stepped in. "No one else is to come in. If they do, attack them and bring them out *immediately*." I growled and Cloudjaw nodded.

Lionroar was prodding at Magmapaw. She lay on the ground motionless, her breathing fast and shallow. Poppyheart pushed me back out.

"I don't think she can handle this much blood loss. It's not normal. At first it was what she had to eat before leaving, now it's just constant blood mixed with white and yellow. That's deadly." She murmured and the camp went dead silent. Her eyes were filled with horror.

I could hear moans from far away. Brackenpelt started to heave loudly. I stepped back in and Lionroar was laying beside his daughter.

"Lionroar," I murmured, nudging him. *Will Magmapaw become one of those flesh-eating cats? Will Brackenpelt?* "You need to step away from

Magmapaw." Lionroar growled as Poppyheart tried to drag her away.

"She's all I have left, leave her alone!" Lionroar yowled, unsheathing his claws and baring his teeth.

The muscle around the bite began to twitch madly and before we knew it, Magmapaw started to stir, making a moaning sound. "Magmapaw! You're alright!" Lionroar breathed. Magmapaw didn't answer, only reached for him, mouth gaping open. Her eyes were wide... and white.

"Magmapaw?" Lionroar mewed. I shoved him out of the way just as she came at him.

"What are you doing?!" Lionroar sneered, shoving me away with a deadly glare. Magmapaw dove for Lionroar and before he could do anything, she bit down on his side and ripped his flesh off. The wound gushed thick, crimson blood. I felt my stomach spin and had to squeeze my eyes shut. *This isn't real! It has to be a dream!*

Poppyheart screamed and Brackenpelt gasped, clenching his jaw. Blood started to come out of his jaw even with his mouth clenched shut. He made a dry heaving noise and he laid down.

Lionroar backed into the corner of the medicine den as Magmapaw stumbled over.

"Poppyheart, get any supplies that might not have been infected and get out." I ordered and she nodded, shaking badly and stepping over Brackenpelt's still corpse. I shoved Magmapaw into the farthest corner and watched her frail body tumble over. She continued to stumble toward me until Poppyheart gathered the remaining supplies. We then dashed out of the medicine den.

"Cloudjaw, Whitetooth, close up the den. None of them will survive." I instructed and the two warriors nodded despite the confusion in their eyes.

Birdfeather hurried over, her belly swinging as she stepped closer. "What's going on?" She whispered and I walked by her, avoiding eye

contact.

"SpiritClan." I began, stepping on top of the High Stone. "Something is spreading through out the Twolegplace. We must contain it before it spreads into the forest like it had into Brackenpelt and Magmapaw. Some kind of infection Poppyheart can't fix is spreading to the brain and giving you a... craving for flesh." Gasps echoed among the cats below. The Clan murmured to each other.

"Lionroar won't make it because he was bitten. If someone starts to cough up blood or is bitten by anyone or anything, kill them. Do not hesitate. I know it isn't right, but we cannot let the forest become over run." I stomped my paw onto the rock.

"Cloudjaw, keep the Clan in order. I need to warn the other Clans before it's too late. Poppyheart, you're coming with me." She only nodded, eyes wide with distraught and confusion.

I hopped back down and cats started attacking me with questions. I waved my tail for silence and they all stopped. "I know nothing about what is happening. I will be back." *Hopefully.*

Birdfeather's gaze met mine and I sighed, dipping my head to her. She looked more scared than ever.

"What do we do? Are we going to die?" She whispered. *Over course she's scared. Who wouldn't be? But right now, she needs to stop being dramatic and be quiet!* "I don't know yet, love. I'll be back."

Poppyheart padded out of the camp with me. Silently we made our way around the trees that covered our territory. "We'll head to LightClan then make our way to DarkClan." I muttered without looking over. Poppyheart sighed and we picked up the pace. The moor came into view and I began to trot.

We crossed the border without hesitation and made our way through the long grass. I went around the hill and was met by a patrol coming out of the entrance of the den. "Woah, woah, what are you two doing here?" Ratstripe growled. Raincloud, Squirreltail and Deerpaw stood behind him.

"We need to speak with Crystalstar and Lilypatch. There is something going on in Twolegplace... Something sinister." I responded in an even tone.

Ratstripe exchanged a glance with Raincloud then Squirrelflight. Finally he nodded with his eyes narrowed, "I will escort you there."

I dipped my head in return and followed the patrol into their camp.

Crystalstar was speaking to Lilypatch and I padded to them. They looked up, confused and alarmed.

"Reedstar," She dipped her head and Lilypatch did also, standing. Before she could say anything more, I muttered, "Could we speak in your den? This is something no cat can hear or panic will come." I asked, padding to what seemed to be her den.

Crystalstar blocked my path. "We shall speak outside." She growled, chin raised. I nodded and followed her. My heart raced.

Will she believe me? Even if she doesn't, I shouldn't care. She'll have to deal with it herself.

"Now. What is it?" She mewed, Lilypatch sat beside her, eyes narrowed. "I know you won't believe me like I hadn't when Scar warned me. But he showed me these cats that he had woken up to." I began, trying not to rush out the details. "He had fallen in and died because of them. They ate him alive. Six cats. I tried to save him, but they were surrounding him." I lied.

"Their eyes were white like they were dead and all they did was moan. Then I came back and Magmapaw and Brackenpelt were puking blood. Magmapaw had been bitten in Twolegplace and somehow Brackenpelt had gotten the infection, too." Crystalstar and Lilypatch exchanged confused glances.

"Magmapaw died of blood loss shortly after," Poppyheart continued, "And Lionroar wouldn't leave her side. Magmapaw came back alive and took a chunk of meat off of his side. Brackenpelt died, too, but Reedstar ordered to close up the medicine den before someone else was bitten."

Crystalstar seemed speechless and Poppyheart looked over at me. I shrugged.

"Is this a joke? Because if it is, it's a sick joke and we are both not amused in any way." Lilypatch hissed, tail lashing. Poppyheart shook her head, "No, please, you have to believe us. I don't understand what's happening either but this is real."

Crystalstar opened her mouth to argue but I stopped her. "We only came to warn you. Good day to you." I dipped my head and stood up, taking Poppyheart with me. Crystalstar and Lilypatch began to discuss what we had said as we left in the direction of DarkClan.

"Lets see if Leopardstar believes us." I growled, trotting through the long grass and heather. The sky was filled with dark clouds, threatening rain. My mind was whirling.

It took us a while to get to DarkClan's border, but after a few spider-webs and tripping over moss-lined logs, we made it. "Hurry. We need to get back to camp." We began to run through the dense woods of thick pine trees and puddles.

The marsh opened up and a cleared spot with not too many trees came into sight. Thorns were wrapped around the clearing.

"This place always gave me the creeps," Poppyheart whispered, looking around.

"Leopardstar! Reedstar is here." Darkheart announced. Boldfang and Venomsoul gave us a growl as we passed them.

They have always hated us. One battle for territory and we are hated upon. Pebblefur poked her head out and Poppyheart glanced over.

Leopardstar came out of her den. *For a she-cat, she's always scared me.*

She's massive for a she-cat, too. Spotted and covered in muscle, Leopardstar isn't afraid to kill. She'd be perfect to help kill of the infection.

"Reedstar." She growled as I came up to her. I had to look up to her,

that's how tall and muscular she was. She was the reason I lost my five other lives, which was embarrassing to admit. Well three of the five I lost, anyway.

Dipping my head to the leader of DarkClan, I kept my voice calm. "Leopardstar. I need to tell you something. Please do not take this as a joke or anything. I have never been more serious in my life..." I mewed and she narrowed her eyes.

Poppyheart and I explained quickly to her what had happened and she sat down, tail lashing. "I believe this isn't a joke." She mewed and I leaned in. *Finally!*

"I think this is a lie," She snarled, shooting me a glare. "What are you trying to do? Scare my Clan away? I knew you hated DarkClan, but I didn't think you'd try to scare us off." She rumbled as she purred, standing.

"Please! This isn't a lie! If you don't believe us, something will happen to you!" Poppyheart pleaded, eyes glazed in hope.

The tall she-cat turned away and flicked her tail."Leave, Reedstar." Leopardstar hissed. "Darkheart, get these fools out of my territory." Darkheart nodded and led us away. He led us through the territory and to our border.

He turned to us suddenly, "I believe you." He murmured as we crossed into our own territory. I glanced over my shoulder, almost confused. "You do?" Poppyheart and I asked at the same time.

Darkheart nodded, "I'll try to convince Leopardstar. I usually sneak to Twolegplace to see someone and she was... Some kind of flesh-eater. Kay was her name. I only got a small bite from her. I can convince Leopardstar." Darkheart explained, showing a bite under his fur just under his shoulder.

"Darkheart... You won't make it through the night with that bite." Poppyheart whispered, examining it.

"Then I'll have to convince Leopardstar tonight." I thought I caught a glimpse of sorrow in his light blue eyes. "Good luck." He dipped

his head and trotted off.

Poppyheart exchanged a relieved glance with me. "At least someone believes us." I murmured. "Is that what you care about right now? Darkheart - a living cat - won't make it through the night and you care about someone believing us?" Poppyheart growled and I glared at her.

"It wouldn't matter if I cared anyway." I scowled, "Caring doesn't save the infected."

Chapter 2

I came back into camp with Poppyheart at my side to find that the camp was in chaos.

Skyclaw was running from a stumbling Lionroar and Rockpaw. Magmapaw was chewing on Feathernose and Birdfeather was up on High Stone.

Blackpaw was attacking Rockpaw as I gazed around again, my eyes wide and jaw to the ground. Magmapaw looked up from eating Feathernose and stumbled to Bluewave. She was attacking Flamescar and Berryfur while the elders backed into the den from behind her.

"What is going on?" I yowled, panic edging my tone. Cloudjaw and Whitetooth ran over. "Reedstar! Get help! We couldn't keep back the three, they were pounding on it and then they pushed us and we were lucky not to be attacked!" Whitetooth panted.

Fools! Can't they do a simple task? I thought I taught you all be better? I wanted to scream at them, but I forced my words down and thought of a more calm response.

"The Clans don't believe us. Darkheart of DarkClan does, but he was bitten while seeing a rogue cat named Kay, who was one of the ones Scar showed me." I hissed. "Kill them with all the strength you have!" I ordered and they nodded, hesitating as they got near a flesh-eater.

I ran at Magmapaw from behind and broke her neck. She still didn't die. I gagged at the sight of her dangling head. I grabbed a rock from the High Stone, balancing on my hind legs, whacked it onto her head several times. Blood splattered everywhere as it plunged into her head.

I tried not to heave at the gruesome sight. I made a dry heaving sound and turned around.

I ran at Rockpaw and shoved him away. Lionroar heard it and began to stumble toward me. I kicked his leg out from underneath him and heard the crunch as his leg suffered the terrible blow. Lionroar only fell for a bit before he began to drag his leg, feeling no emotion other than hunger.

I backed away from the two flesh hungry cats.

I can't kill two! I can barely kill one!

My heart was racing and my mind was whirling in confusion. I began to panic. I ran between the two flesh-eaters and led them to the pile of rocks we called the High Stone.

The two flesh-eating cats stumbled for me and moaned as if trying to yell at me. They came to the High Stone where Birdfeather sat and where I stood.

I dropped a heavy rock down at them and it hit Lionroar straight in the eye, leaving a deep gash. Blood oozed out of it as he got up. I dropped another onto Rockpaw as he tried to climb up.

Rockpaw didn't try to stand after I hit him, the huge rock severing his skull and hit the brain. "Hit them in the head, get their brain! It's the only thing keeping them alive!" I called to the few surviving warriors.

"Reedstar! This isn't going to work! We can't kill them all! We need to flee," Cloudjaw insisted, running from Feathernose. She must've come back a few heartbeats ago.

Lionroar moaned and opened his jaws at Birdfeather and I. She whimpered and I climbed back down. "Retreat! Follow me! Hurry!" I called and Birdfeather rushed down and I pushed her along. Bluewave, Blackpaw and Whitetooth followed behind Birdfeather, Cloudjaw and I.

We rushed away as quick as we could. Oceantail and Skyclaw screamed in the camp and I pushed Birdfeather forward.

"Wait, what about my sister? Reedstar she needs us!" Bluewave wailed, stopping. "Are you insane, Bluewave? Did you not see what

happened to Lionroar? Keep moving, they won't make it." I growled, keeping my eyes forward.

Bluewave hesitated for a while as we moved along. "What about the elders? They need out help!" She persisted, her eyes glazed with worry.

"Come on, they'll be with everyone else soon." I heard Blackpaw whisper and my ear flicked in annoyance.

The only sound was the wind as we headed away from camp. Cloudjaw was constantly looking behind him to see if the coast was clear. Birdfeather and Bluewave were whimpering softly. Blackpaw and Whitetooth are as silent as mice. I, for one, was taking the lead, emotionless like the flesh-eaters.

"Where are we going?" Blackpaw whispered and I kept going. *Where are we going?* I asked myself. *I'm not sure where. Maybe to LightClan... No, we can't.*

I stopped and began to climb a thick tree. "Come. We will stay in this tree until morning. I'm assuming the flesh-eaters won't be able to climb." I ordered and the five others slowly made their way up the tree.

I took post on the lowest branch while the others went higher. Thick branches made its way to the top, getting thinner every few tail lengths.

Sighing, I laid down and closed my eyes. I hadn't realized how badly I was shaking until that moment. The sound of flesh being ripped apart made me cringe and the screams of my Clan echoed in my ears. *Would we been able to save them? Is there a cure that Poppyheart could've figured out?* I wondered, eyes narrowed and tail trembling.

"Reedstar," A whisper came from just above. I looked up, searching through the branches. A head popped over the edge of the branch, paws following. It was Birdfeather.

"Yes?" I replied and she fixed how she was laying. *For StarClan's*

sakes, sit still before you fall!

"I don't know how I'm suppose to sleep. I'm worried about our kits and what's going to happen to them." Birdfeather whispered. There was terror behind her light green eyes.

"You can't come down here. You'll be fine, Birdfeather. Our kits won't be born for at least a moon." I reassured and she looked around, eyes darting from one thing to another. She seemed lost and she was definitely not reassured.

"Actually she seems to be due in a quarter-moon." Poppyheart corrected from the other side of the tree, just a bit higher the Birdfeather.

I shook my head, eyes wide. *What? Quarter-moon? She has like... more than that! She can't be that far along...*

Disbelieving, I snorted, "You lie. She won't be having them for *at least* a half-moon!" Poppyheart rolled her eyes, "Who's the medicine cat here? Right, that would be me." She retorted and I wrinkled my nose and looked away, refusing to believe her.

"What do I do? Will they be safe? Will we have a safe place for them by then?" Birdfeather breathed, trying to stay low but her voice was starting to get higher with paranoia.

"You're alright, they'll be fine, too. You need to calm down, Birdfeather." Poppyheart mewed.

Why is she so reassuring? She's better than me! That's not good. I'm the leader, I need to be better than everyone else! To prove my point, I climbed up to her branch and settled in beside her. She nuzzled into my fur and let out a long sigh.

Blackpaw and Whitetooth chimed in, making sure Birdfeather was alright. Meanwhile, I kept quite and stayed on guard.

A good leader doesn't have time reassuring others. I have to guard them. Besides, why waste my time on her? She's only a cat. Soon she'll be a flesh-eater. I'm sure she won't last long.

The sun wasn't yet down and the prey seemed to be gone. There were none scattering around like they were earlier that day. It was as if they hid from the screams. I searched the forest. Oddly, I noticed we had come close to the DarkClan border. *Hooray. Now they'll accuse us of spying.*

A moaning sound came from not far away. I searched the darkening forest. I sat up, alarmed and everyone quieted down. "What is it?" Cloudjaw murmured from above.

"Shh!" I hissed, my ear flinching as the noise grew closer.

Two flesh-eaters - both bloody and torn up - came around from the direction of Twolegplace. Silence in the tree was all that followed from their appearance.

I watched patiently as the two stumbled on anything in their way. I assumed they were going toward the moaning in the camp. The screams could have attracted them a long time ago, I figured.

I let out a breath I hadn't realized I was holding in. I relaxed my muscles and slumped down, sighing. Closing my eyes, I fought back the images of death, screams and blood.

Something told me I was once warned of this.

A snap in the tree made me open my eyes and unsheathe my claws. A small branch came down in beside Birdfeather and I and hit my branch. The branch we perched on swayed as I watched the small branch tumble to the ground. Birdfeather stirred beside me but didn't wake.

"Sorry," Cloudjaw apologized, looking down at me. I narrowed my eyes and sheathed my claws again, turning away. I sighed, laying down. The sun was going down and the moon was replacing it.

My eyes slowly closed and before I knew it, I was flashed into a memory.

Bloody, growling cats staggered toward me. I looked around for an escape route but the cats had surrounded me. Breathing heavily, I backed away quickly, only to be met with a cliff. My heart lurched

in fright and I looked over my shoulder. The gorge just out of LightClan's territory came into my view and I tried not to panic.

The waves churned as the water tumbled down-stream and to the marsh in DarkClan and to a lake out of our territories. Rocks jutted out of the river, pointed and threatening.

I looked back at the flesh-hungry cats and my eyes widened. Their jaws snapped at me, blood and spit dripping to the ground. I squealed as one lunged toward me.

I backed off the cliff and let out a terrified scream. The water came to me before I could take in a gulp of air. Surrounded by waves, I fought to go to the surface.

I looked around and the water slowly faded to red. The flesh-eaters plunged into the water with me, barrel-rolling down stream like debris after a hefty storm. Their jaws were gaping open and eyes wide. It was as if they didn't even breathe anymore!

My lungs ached and a voice came to my mind, a raspy tom's voice: "*Blood will surround the selfish and jaws will consume the softest.*"

A memory of me waking up, squealing in fright as a kit, came to me. My mother had listened to my detailed complaint of my dream and asked our medicine cat - Silverberry at the time - what it meant. She said it was a night-terror and nothing was to come from it.

Walking up with a jolt, my head shot up, ears straight and tail trembling. *Their faces are so familiar to me now. I can't pin-point any names, but they seemed to be cats I knew... When I was a kit, I had no idea who they were... But now, they're so familiar. Could those flesh-eaters be my Clanmates?*

The sun was coming over the tree-tops as I woke up more fully. I looked up to see Whitetooth climbing down.

"What are you doing?" I sneered. He jumped down to my branch and shrugged.

"I couldn't sleep at all last night and I just got tired of waiting for

everyone else to wake up," He replied, turning to me. "I guess you were awake already." Whitetooth sighed.

What, so you were going to wake me up? What if I hadn't of finished the dream? My great StarClan, Whitetooth. Me and my sleep are very *important!*

I nodded and stood up, stretching. I didn't bother trying to get the blood out of my fur, it would take too long and I was afraid I'd get infected.

Whitetooth jumped to the ground and alarm shot through me. "Get up here!" I hissed to him, leaning over the branch.

He gave me a look and searched the forest. "It looks like we're fine. No flesh-eaters here." Whitetooth explained, looking up at me just before he ended his sentence.

"For now," I mumbled half to myself.

"While you're down there, check if the coast is clear and search for any prey." I ordered. *He can do it, I have other duties.*

He nodded and looked around, padding not too far away. I heard a screech and I jumped up, heart lurching in sudden fear. I took deep breaths and looked toward where the sound came from.

Several flesh-eaters came out of the camp, pulled by the sound. "Whitetooth!" Cloudjaw called, hopping to the post opposite to mine.

"Get up here before they find you!" I rolled my eyes and watched as Whitetooth hurried away and up the tree again. The flesh-eaters started coming toward the tree we were in - thanks to Whitetooth and Cloudjaw - but another scream came, followed by more and more.

Slowly, the flesh-eaters turned away, toward DarkClan. "Darkheart." Poppyheart breathed, coming down to Cloudjaw's branch. My ear twitched. I had never thought of that.

"Everyone, we need to leave to go see DarkClan." Poppyheart

announced and everyone started to stand again.

"Woah, woah. I'm the leader here." I corrected, ears flat. Poppyheart rolled her eyes. "Yes, whatever '*master*'." She mumbled.

"I want you guys to stay here. Cloudjaw and I will be back in a bit. Do *not* leave this tree," I announced and the cats above all sat down. Birdfeather blinked open her eyes and looked around groggily. "Even if we don't come back." I finished, hopping down once I knew the coast was clear.

"Whitetooth, keep an eye out. We'll be back. Hopefully," I called to him and he nodded, straightening his posture. I looked away and trotted toward DarkClan's territory.

"Great. We can barely fight them, how are we going to fight off - possibly - a whole Clan of them?" Cloudjaw mused, impatience and fright deep in his voice.

"I'm not sure." Was all I replied with, speeding up. *If Leopardstar doesn't die, maybe she can help us survive?* I wondered, my mind traveling. *I honestly couldn't care less if the whole Clan dies, just not Leopardstar. She's strong and never afraid to kill.*

We hurried into the camp; chaos was everywhere.

Blood filtered the ground and bodies scattered the camp. Blood trickled from their bodies. I could sense the tension from the entrance.

Leopardstar was trying to beat off two cats while a few others ran away from the stumbling flesh-eaters. I dashed to a cat who was about to be eaten and shoved it out of the way.

Grabbing a stone that was decorating the medicine den, I smashed it deep into the flesh-eaters skull. I had to smash it a few more times before it actually died for good.

Leopardstar took a step back from the two cats and I came toward her, shoving the two flesh-eaters to the side. They fell, but only for a heartbeat. The two stood up without any look of pain - or any emotion for that matter.

I jumped as high as I could and smashed down on one of their heads. I jumped and jumped several times before finally, it laid still. Blood covered my paws and I shook out my fur before realizing the other flesh-eater was coming for me.

Jumping away from the cat before it got to bite me, I slashed it's face and it stumbled to the left. I growled at it and my lip curled in defense and anger.

Leopardstar came over, smashing the cats head with a stone. The stone was lodged in the flesh-eater's head but not far enough to hit it's brain. Leopardstar smashed it to the ground and continued to hit the flesh-eater with her paws.

I watched - taking a step back - at how brutal she was. She didn't hesitate to kill them. I knew that she didn't hesitate for cats in other Clans, but in her own Clan? I never expected that. *I guess that's what we have all come to,* I thought with a shiver.

"Retreat! There are too many!" Leopardstar whipped around to me when I called it out. Cats who were alive dashed out, some limping and some bleeding heavily. Very few of them came out clean.

I didn't think Leopardstar would let them, let alone follow them, since another Clan member had ordered them, but she did. Cloudjaw led the way, bolting through the pines. I came in beside him, breathing heavily.

Leopardstar came to run beside us as well, not saying a word.

Before I knew it, we were in a huge crowd of flesh-eaters. Some came from our camp, others came from Twolegplace.

Great! What do we do now?

I twisted in a different direction, a semi-clear path. "Anyone who's bit, go! You won't make it." I yelled over my shoulder. They didn't leave.

"Now!" I yowled. I quickly looked ahead and back at the cats. One cat halted and stood there. It was Tigerface. No emotion was shown as he let the flesh-eaters grab him.

Leafpaw stopped, too. She had struggled to keep up with the group anyway with a bite mark the size of her head on her leg.

Thrushpaw stumbled and fell. He was bleeding badly and was bound to die and come back anytime anyway. He screamed - like Leafpaw had - a scream that made the fur on my spine stand up.

We pounded away and back into our territory. Within no time, I spotted the tree. There weren't many flesh-eaters after us at that point.

"Okay, hurry. There isn't enough room in this tree for anymore cats." I explained, gesturing the our tree. "Leopardstar, you should take your Clan to the tree beside it,"

She glared at me and didn't move. "You just sacrificed three of my warriors and you expect me to just *let* you lead what's left of my Clan?" She growled, shoving her broad head closer to mine.

I tried not to flinch. "Think again." Leopardstar hissed.

"You saw what those cats did! One bite, that's all it takes; you can't risk them. Listen to me, you don't have many warriors left. I know how to save them." I replied evenly as she turned away.

"You haven't been in this a quarter-moon and you think you can just *run* the show? You may have led SpiritClan but not DarkClan." Leopardstar snarled, claws digging into the ground and her jaw muscles tensing with rage.

"I know that, but I can help you. You lost both of your medicine cats and I still have mine. We can help you. And you can help us." I reassured, a smirk threatening to lift up.

With her help we'll be unstoppable. Forget her Clan, mine needs help more.

Leopardstar looked away without answering and climbed the tree I had pointed to. My eyes threatened to spill my feelings of relief.

I thought she'd be harder to get to. I laughed inwardly and climbed the tree with Cloudjaw following.

"What happened?" Blackpaw whispered, his head dangling from his branch.

"Why are they here? Are they helping us?" Birdfeather gasped and I sighed. *Why did I chose her as a mate? What in StarClan's name did I see in her? Annoying is all I see now. I wonder what she'll be like as a flesh-eater? It won't take long before she's gone anyway.*

I rolled my eyes and put a smile on my face. "They needed our help and I'm not sure." I replied dryly and she nodded. *Did you not get my message of adgitation?*

Cloudjaw came down, his eyes filled with worry. "What will we do when LightClan comes for our help? They won't last in the moor." He asked, head tilted to the side, and I nodded. "We'll wait till then. Two days and we move out, it should give LightClan time to find us when they are hit with the flesh-eaters," I told him and he dipped his head without saying anything more.

"Plus, if we stay quiet enough, the flesh-eaters will be drawn to LightClan's noise. If they didn't believe us then, they will soon enough."

Cloudjaw narrowed his eyes. "In two days time it will be the Gathering night. What do we do then?" I purred, "LightClan will wait and wait and eventually find out something's wrong. That is, if they make it two days without being attacked."

Chapter 3

Sunkit's mewling in the night kept me awake. Heatherleg wasn't a mother and I wondered how she was going to feed her. *Surely Sunkit was old enough to eat prey anyway?* But that didn't exactly matter. No one had prey at all. Not since the day it begun.

As if on cue, Whitetooth climbed down to my branch. He only sat there. Suddenly, Whitetooth's stomach - and mine too - growled loudly.

"We should hunt while it's quiet," Whitetooth whispered. I snorted, looking over at him.

"Hunt what? Leaves? Flesh-eaters? We can't hunt at night, there aren't any prey." I retorted, sitting up. Whitetooth sighed and gave me a *Are you that mouse-brained?* look. "DarkClan has night patrols to catch the frogs that don't sleep at night, plus there are plenty of nocturnal creatures in our territory, too. We can hunt them," Whitetooth suggested.

I forgot about that. But what if they were infected? I shook my head and then my pelt. "Lets go." I whispered and he nodded, searching for flesh-eaters before hopping down.

I followed him, coming in beside him, as he sniffed around.

"It's hard to smell prey when all there is to smell is blood!" Whitetooth sneered to himself. I heard paws fight to catch up and Whitetooth and I whipped around, fur spiked up. I forced my fur to lie flat when I realized it was only Venomsoul and Leopardstar.

"Might as well join you," Venomsoul growled, his eyes narrowed as he padded by. Leopardstar went one way and Venomsoul went another. Whitetooth followed Venomsoul and I went forward.

"Don't cause trouble." I hissed to Whitetooth but he didn't acknowledge me.

I parted my jaws to search for any scent and got the smell of a mole not far away. I narrowed my eyes and searched the forest for the tiny creature. I caught sight of it as it scurried to a tree, chewing on something. Stalking carefully toward it, my paws trembled and my stomach threatened to growl. I clenched my jaw and focused on the mole. Taking careful steps, I came so close to it I could almost just grab it with a paw.

Instead, I leaped silently at it and landed squarely onto it, biting down onto its neck. *It won't come back alive, right?* I wondered. I drove a claw into it's head just to be sure.

Looking around, I made sure no one was around. I dug into the mole and finished it in no time. *No one will know.* I purred to myself, digging a hole and burying the left overs.

I scurried away, sniffing around for more prey. I passed tree after tree, bush after bush, and finally I came across the smell of a crow. I stalked toward the smell and found myself at a clearing full of a whole bunch of crows.

I stalked silently closer, being quick. Crows don't tend to stick around. *What a lucky night,* I thought, leaping towards the murder of crows. I landed onto one of them just as someone else came for another one. Leopardstar killed one with a final bite and I did so too.

The other two crows fluttered off, calling to others in warning.

"Good job," I commented but she only padded away, tail high.

She grabbed a dead vole from a hole in the ground and I followed her. "We should go to the marsh in DarkClan. I've heard there are plenty of frogs there," I suggested through a mouthful of feathers.

"Our territory is full of the infected. Do you think we can actually get through there without getting eaten or even a simply scratch? No," she replied. Her voice was hoarse and muffled from the tail of the vole and the crow's tail.

I narrowed my eyes. "We can drop off the prey at our trees and hide

our scents by going in a mud puddle or in a puddle of their blood?" I mewed, twitching my ear. Leopardstar whipped around, fury raging in her gaze. "Just because there's a deadly infection spreading, doesn't give you any reason to go to our marsh and steal our prey." She spat, dropping her fresh-kill.

"We won't be, you're with us-" I began but she shoved her muzzle into my face and shoved me back. "I didn't agree to be with you, Reedstar. Shut your mouth before I do it for you. The marshland will always be my territory."

Rage pulsed through my blood and I shoved my face into hers. "We offered help *and* my territory. The least you could do is give us prey from your marshland!" I tried to keep my voice low but fury made it go higher.

Her ears went flat to her head. "I don't have to be in here. I could leave whenever, but I need a medicine cat. I won't just *give* you my prey." She took a step back, eyes sizing me up as her lip curled in disgust.

"By the smell of it, you already had something to eat. Maybe if you weren't such a selfish leader, you wouldn't need my prey."

And with that, Leopardstar grabbed her prey and stormed off.

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Just as the sun came up, I found my way back to the tree. Birdfeather was awake and alarmed.

"Where were you? I thought a flesh-eater had gotten you!" She gasped when I climbed the tree. I had gotten a mouse on my way back, plus the crow and another vole. *What are you, my mother?*

I sighed, dropping the prey carefully on the base of the branch - where it was thickest. "I went out for prey, we haven't eaten in at least three days."

Birdfeather nodded and looked around, "Whitetooth never came back." She mewed, worry edging her tone. I nodded, "He'll be back. Venomsoul wouldn't let him die." I reassured, looking up at the tree.

"Anyone hungry?" I called up and heads immediately popped over their branches.

Bluewave came down first, grabbing the mouse. "Blackpaw, we can share." She mewed as she climbed up.

Poppyheart came down next, grabbing the crow. "Come Birdfeather, you can eat with me. Reedstar can have the vole." She gestured with a nod of her head and Birdfeather looked at me. I dipped my head and she climbed up.

"Cloudjaw, you can have the vole. I can wait," I called up and he slowly climbed down. Like a vicious lion, he grabbed it and rushed away. His eyes were glazed in hunger and his stomach was deflated. I remembered how he didn't eat for about four days, not like three like the rest of them.

Cloudjaw refused to eat until everyone else ate. He didn't want to be selfish. So about four days without a morsel of food? I couldn't do it. *I* needed to be strong and healthy. *I* needed fresh-kill.

And if Cloudjaw hadn't of wanted to eat, so be it.

I shook out my pelt and watched for anything out in the forest. I took a brief look over to the right where the tree that held Leopardstar's little group of DarkClan was perched. Sharppaw, Heatherleg, Boldface and Venomsoul included. Sunkit was there, too, always huddled with Heatherleg.

Bushes swayed in the denser part of the forest and Venomsoul and Whitetooth popped out. Whitetooth carried a mouse and a thrush while Venomsoul carried a robin and a squirrel.

Whitetooth separated from Venomsoul with a nod.

Whitetooth dropped his catches on my branch and I scooted over a bit. "Here, you look like you're hungry." He nudged over the thrush and I dipped my head.

Might as well have two! Everyone else is fine, I need more prey and they don't! I tore away the feathers and dug in. I only got a bit into my thrush when moans started to come closer.

"The flesh-eaters can smell our flesh-kill..." I muttered half to myself.

"Throw the rest to the ground, hopefully they'll eat it and stay away from the trees!" I instructed and a few bodies of fresh-kill fell from the tree.

Flesh-eaters hurried toward the smell of blood and flesh and fought their way to get to the crow and vole. I quickly finished my thrush and threw it toward them, farther than the rest. A huge group of flesh-eaters - seeming to be from ten to twenty at *least* - had came back from DarkClan.

A small group stumbled to the thrush and groaned at each other, shoving them out of the way. Whitetooth licked his lips and threw his toward the group, hitting one straight in the eye.

The flesh-eater didn't care, it just fought to get to the mouse before the rest. The prey didn't hold off, though. Within heartbeats, they began to stagger their way to the trees, mostly to ours.

Groaning, the large group of cats clawed at the tree slowly and weakly. Blood stained the tree trunk as their bloody stomachs and paws rubbed against the bark. My pelt bristled up. I jumped in fright as one cat started to climb over the others, reaching for the branch and slipping. It missed by a whiskers-length.

"I don't think we can stay here much longer. If someone doesn't make noise or if LightClan doesn't get attacked soon, more flesh-eaters will come and pile up!" Whitetooth growled to me, keeping his voice low so only I could hear it.

"I know." Was all I replied with. Silence in the tree came after that.

Leopardstar broke the silence. It felt like boulders were lifted off my shoulders when her call caused several flesh-eaters to stumble to her tree.

Boldfang - who had been on a low branch - scurried up to the next branch as cats tried to pull him down.

"We need to leave. LightClan could use our help anyway."

Leopardstar called over and I snorted. "Really? Two things. One: how are we suppose to get down and two: they wouldn't accept it even if we begged!"

She glared at me through the branches for a heartbeat before Boldfang scurried up the tree more. Claws of the infected dug into the tree and climbed over cats. A few flesh-eaters got to the first branch.

My tail lashed and I looked down to the flesh-eaters below. I growled inwardly. *You ruined my whole life. Everything would be so different of you fools hadn't of come along.*

"We need to find a way to leave, quick." Boldface called over, worry edging his tone as flesh-eaters tried desperately to get up. "And how will we do *that*? Sacrifice more warriors or kill them off?" I retorted, giving him a look.

He didn't seem to notice, watching the flesh-eaters tear at the tree. A screech rose among the tree and everyone's necks snapped toward LightClan's moor - including the flesh-eaters.

"Good timing Crystalstar." Whitetooth muttered as the flesh-eaters stumbled away.

I saw a branch on the ground. For some reason it caught my eye. I also found myself finding vines hanging from a few trees not far off.

The ground cleared off quickly with more screams coming from the moor. I hopped down silently and grabbed a few long, thickish branches. "Whitetooth, Cloudjaw, come here." I called up to the cats.

The two white cats hopped down. "Find vines and thick branches like this one... I have an idea." They hesitated but left to find the materials.

With the branch I had, I began to chew on the end to make a point. I didn't stop until it was sharp. Pointy enough to puncture someone. I grabbed the vines and waited for the two to come back. I heard paws coming toward me and my head shot toward it. Luckily, it

was only the alive cats - from DarkClan and SpiritClan.

"What's your idea, Reedstar?" Blackpaw mewed. Without looking up, I replied, "You'll see."

Within heartbeats, Whitetooth and Cloudjaw were back with vines and thick branches under their chins and in their mouths. "Alright, chew the end of the branches until it pointy." Whitetooth and Cloudjaw passed the branches among the cats.

The group of cats chewed the ends of the sticks until they were pointy enough. "Cloudjaw, come here." I mewed to him and he padded over, the stick in his jaws.

I grabbed the stick from his mouth and held it onto his side. I wrapped the vine around his ribs. I pulled it as tight as I could.

"Help everyone out and do as I did." I announced and they turned to each other to do it. I, for one, stood and watched. Cloudjaw fixed me up with one and then I sat down.

The stick on Cloudjaw was out a bit farther than his muzzle. The vine was wrapped thickly around the end and to the middle of the stick.

Another screamed pierced through the air, more tom-like. Loud moans lifted to the sky and was brought here, causing shivers to course through my spine.

"Also, you'll need a back up plan. Drag some rocks with you and point up the ends of more sticks to carry in your mouth," I added, sighing.

I've never felt so anxious in my life. Well, maybe a few times... Also I'm exhausted. I've never wanted to fall asleep and never wake up in my life until now.

I waited for several long heartbeats for them to be done, and then stood up again.

Unsheathing my claws, I growled, "Now let's go kill some flesh-eaters."

Chapter 4

"Where? Are we going to help LightClan?" Bluewave murmured, padding in beside me as I led the way. Just then, I felt Leopardstar's presence beside me.

I nodded after a heartbeat of glancing over at the DarkClan leader. "Yes. We need all the help we can get and right now, so do they." Bluewave dipped her head and fell back into the rear of the group.

"If I lose *any* more of my warriors, Reedstar, *I swear* you'll regret it." Leopardstar snarled and kept her gaze forward. I gulped and took a deep breath. "Leopardstar, we both know we can't be sure *any* of us will come out alive. We have to help them."

"This is a suicide mission!" She hissed, shooting a hateful glance at me. "I might just take my warriors and go do our own thing."

I shook my head lightly, trying not to flinch as she growled. *Wow she* really *hates me... All I really want is more warriors so they can protect me. It'll be instinct. I'm the leader, after all. What would they do without me?*

"It isn't a suicide mission." I argued, keeping my chin up. "We've learned how to kill them, and once LightClan learns the discovery I've made-" The tall DarkClan leader scoffed, "It's always about you, isn't it?"

I didn't bother to reply as we neared LightClan's camp. Without realizing it, we had already come into their territory. Leopardstar's ears pricked at the sound of moaning close by. "They're blind right?" Cloudjaw murmured as we halted. I shrugged and whispered, "Beats me..."

Three flesh-eaters were tearing open a cat by the looks of how they were standing. The dying cat couldn't be seen by the way they huddled over it, but it was clear what was happening from the tearing noise. Leopardstar dragged herself forward in a stalking

position. I held my tail up to signal the rest to wait. *She wouldn't listen to my orders even if I begged.* "No one moves until these ones are killed off." I mumbled, ducking into the stalking position.

They nodded and I followed Leopardstar. She and I stalked carefully toward them. I grabbed my stick from the vine Cloudjaw had tightly wrapped around my ribs.

Clenching my jaw tightly, I raised it at the first one and jabbed it into it's head. It fell instantly as it punctured it's brain. *That worked better than expected...*

I muffled a scream of surprise as one lifted its head and snarled at me. I yanked the stick from the flesh-eaters skull and jammed it into the other flesh-eaters brain. *That was Jaguarspot.* I thought with a shiver.

What a shame. A grumpy old elder like you? Payback's a pain, isn't it? What had happened was one time while I was still deputy, he had yelled at me for stepping on his tail. I had shoved my muzzle in his face, impressing Birdfeather and hissing, "Excuse me? You think it was *my* fault you were in *my* way?" Honestly. Come on, I could've killed him then and there for yelling at me. *No one* yells at Reedstar; Reedwind then.

"Break times over, Reedstar. We've got company." Leopardstar growled, gesturing to the few flesh-eaters stumbling over.

I sighed, muttering, "Really? Did you make noise or something? Why are they coming this way?" Leopardstar gave me an impatient glare and without answering, stalked forward. *Fine then, don't answer. I'll remember that.*

I raised my tail and flicked it toward LightClans camp. The group of cats came trekking by silently.

"Birdfeather thinks she might be having her kits soon. She can... just feel it. We need to find a place to stay." Poppyheart murmured as I waited for the group to pass.

"Take her to a tree and I'll find you. Make the tree noticeable or

something, this battle probably won't take any time at all. Bring Heatherleg and Sunkit along." I replied dryly, turning away before she could argue.

"Bluewave, go with them, too." I prodded the blueish-gray warrior and she nodded, padding back toward the two she-cats. I could almost sense relief off of her.

Worse case scenario, they all die. Hopefully, Redfur is still alive and we can use him. I thought, dashing toward the group.

I picked up my stick again as I ran by and managed to catch up easily. I could hear the moans and claws hitting flesh even from here, which was at least ten tail-lengths away.

Hurrying along, I took lead and stalked into the entrance to their camp. Blood was pooled everywhere and bodies of LightClan cats covered their grassy clearing. "We're too late. Head back," I hissed but Leopardstar rushed past me, shoving me out of the way and attacking a flesh-eater without hesitation.

I groaned inwardly and my lip twitched in anger. *What did I just say? Why can't you just listen for once! If your Clan dies, I'll be blaming* you *at their funerals!*

I rushed in anyway, stabbing a flesh-eater in the neck. It growled and tried to look over at me, bloody jaws snapping just a whisker away from my paw. I pressed my paw onto it's neck and yanked the stick free. Then, I stabbed it in the head just as it came for me.

Sharppaw stabbed what seemed to once be Deerpaw and I noticed another flesh-eater coming at him. He missed and was focusing on killing her rather than what was around him. Jumping in, I stabbed the flesh-eater just as it's jaws went for Sharppaw. Blood splattered in my face and I grimaced. Sharppaw gave Deerpaw a final stab in forehead and she went limp.

"Stab the cats laying on the ground before they come back!" Leopardstar called as she yanked the bloody stick out of another cats' skull.

Whipping around, I jumped back as a flesh-eater came stumbling toward me. I backed away before it could grab me and went to stab it in the head but foolishly I missed. I growled out of annoyance as I rolled away from the flesh-eater and then used my whole body to twist around and jab it harshly into the skull. It's jaw went loose and it's body hung limp on the stick as I held it up. With a snap, the cat fell to the ground. Half of the stick was still in its head while the other half was in my jaws. I let out a snort and looked around, leaving the jagged half in my mouth.

Venomsoul was attacking a cat with Lighteningice and her three kits, Patchkit, Stormkit and Sootkit, cowering behind him. A flesh-eater was coming from the left of Venomsoul and none of the five cats noticed.

I rushed over just as the flesh-eater grabbed Patchkit. "Noo!" Lighteningice screamed, but it was too late. I stabbed the flesh-eater in the head several times to get it through and it went limp, but the kit squealed in pain.

"Lighteningice! Lighteningice! Patchkit's hurt!" Sootkit squealed, prodding the bleeding kit. Lighteningice was breathing heavily; her kit seemed to no more then three moons old. Patchkit whimpered and curled up in her own white fur. Her pelt began to stain with a dark red substance. I actually felt a pang of despair as I watched the young kit suffer.

"We want your kit to go to StarClan," I started calmly, grabbing the kit carefully from the flesh-eater's jaws. "so I am going to put her out of misery before it turns. Okay?"

Lighteningice looked at me, her eyes flooded with pain and sorrow. She hesitated, then nodded. "You don't have to watch," I whispered, turning away and nipping Patchkit's neck. The small she-kit went silent and became motionless, as if she were only falling asleep... Before turning around again, I stabbed her head with my claw, hitting her brain.

Turning to Lighteningice, I set her kit down and dug a small hole, setting it into it and burying it fast. Her two kits hid under their mother and she didn't do anything. She just stared at the grave.

What do I do? I can't stand here while she grieves...

"Keep an eye on Lighteningice." I muttered to Venomsoul who had just put down another one. He nodded and turned around to speak with her.

Grabbing my small sharpened stick, I ran at another flesh-eater, jabbing it into the skull just as it reached for Redfur. The poor medicine cat couldn't fight even if everyone laid in his paws.

"Redfur, I'll send you out with Blackpaw. He'll show you to Poppyheart," Redfur nodded and I called to Blackpaw. He came running over, a flesh-eater stumbling over. "Lighteningice, go with Blackpaw. Go!" I yelled and she grabbed Sootkit in a hurry. Stormkit tried to follow but he couldn't keep up. It would be like a horrifying maze trying to get out of the clearing for a kit.

"Lighteningice, wait!" He squeaked and I growled, dropping my stick and grabbing him just before one of the last remaining flesh-eaters got to him. Lighteningice gasped and gave me an apologetic and thankful look. I kicked the flesh-eater in the eye and rushed to Blackpaw and Redfur.

I passed the kit to Redfur and he dipped his head to me. Giving him a stern look, I hissed, "Go, go! I'll keep the flesh-eaters back for as long as I can," They bolted away. I backed into LightClan's camp and watched as Raincloud ran away from a flesh-eater, only to be met by a couple others who were eating up another cat.

Snowpaw and Mudpaw worked together to try and beat off two flesh-eaters. *They don't stand a chance,* I thought, rushing toward them.

I grabbed my stick from the ground and ran up behind the flesh-eater, stabbing it in the head as quick as a snake. It fell and it brought me with it. I yanked the stick from it's head and shoved the flesh-eater that was trying to get to Snowpaw with my shoulders. Shoving it again, it stumbled to the ground. I didn't give it time to stand back up, instead smashing it's skull with my sharpened stick. It laid limp on the ground.

"Retreat! Run, lets go!" Leopardstar yowled and cats - again, injured and not injured - filled out of the camp.

I left the stick in the flesh-eater's oozing head and called to the cats, "Go! Go!"

Crystalstar laid on the ground, flesh-eaters tearing away at her. I almost felt pity for the pretty she-cat. *What a fool. Should've believed me.*

I followed in behind the cats and shoved them along. Raincloud limped, his torn up hind leg dragging behind him. "You can't be with us." I growled and he gave me a look.

"But, I have kits!" He gasped, bewildered at my comment. "You'll only devour them at night. You won't make it!" I insisted and he hesitated. "Your kits will remember you," I growled, tripping him and watching him stumble. Flesh-eaters stopped to grab him. Raincloud let out a screech as they groaned and tore at his flesh. Cats looked behind them and I shoved them along. "He fell, I couldn't get to him. Keep going!" I yelled and they did as I said.

I went to the front of the group where Lilypatch and Leopardstar ran. "If anyone is injured, you won't make it! I'm sorry but all you'll do is kill more cats!" I called over my shoulder.

"*Excuse* me? You can't just tell them to do that!" Lilypatch snarled and Leopardstar saved me, "He's right, they'll only kill more of our warriors. They won't make it if their bitten."

I looked over my shoulder again to see that a few cats had stopped. Ratstripe, Spikepaw and Ashclaw only some of them that I could make out.

"If you're just trying to save up on herbs, I swear I'll kill you both in your sleep!" Lilypatch sneered and I snorted inwardly.

Try me, pipsqueak.

She wasn't exactly small, but not any stronger than a regular warrior. She wouldn't last a day alone out in these woods now.

We pounded off through the trees, screams hurtling at us from behind the group. Poppyheart was standing under a tree, pacing. As we neared her, she glanced at us and her ears perked up. I halted the group.

"Finally!" Poppyheart breathed and I nodded. "We can't stay here. We need to leave, Reedstar. I can sense flesh-eaters everywhere,"

"Where would we go? Everywhere we go there are flesh-eaters." I growled and she shrugged, eyes flooded with panic and her tail trembling. "I don't know but we need to leave the forest. The territories in particular."

I narrowed my eyes and Lighteningice and her two kits, Redfur and Blackpaw jumped down from the tree.

"The herd of flesh-eaters are on it's way. We need to move out." Redfur announced, his tail flicking to and fro.

I nodded and before I could say anything, Leopardstar took over. "We are heading to the cave just outside of DarkClan. It is so remote, I highly doubt flesh-eaters would be there," She announced.

I swallowed a growl. *You will be my follower, not my leader. This is nonsense, I should be taking the Clans to the cave!*

"Move out! Quick!" Leopardstar growled and everyone filed away.

I am sick of you taking my place! Stop! I wanted to yowl in her face but I swallowed it down and just went along with it.

I won't be able to keep these thoughts away for much longer. Sooner or later I'm going to take my place as leader among all the Clans.

Chapter 5

I sighed and hurried along beside Lilypatch. She had a glare deep inside her eyes and her fur was on edge. Blood splattered her pelt and I wondered if she had swallowed any blood. If she did, I had a reason to kick her out.

Then I would be one step closer to being leader of them all.

Maybe I can convince Leopardstar to take a step down and let me rule? Maybe she'll go crazy sometime soon? Would killing someone she loves make her insane? Who would that be?

I shook my head, clearing my thoughts. I decided to just wait for that.

We pounded away from the flesh-eaters. I knew in heartbeats there would be more than any of us could handle. They'd eat us in heartbeats. We'd be forced to give our lives.

I rushed harder, my leg muscles screaming in protest. I ran hard through the forest, the pines deepening as we switched territories. My legs began to ache more than ever and just then I wished someone would carry me. *I mean, I'm the leader. I need to be refreshed and strong, right? Right.* But even so, I kept going, every now and again swerving by a flesh-eater. Leopardstar and the group had to move away quickly before it grabbed anyone.

Leopardstar ran in front of me and I swallowed a growl. I was doing just fine until *she* came along and took the lead. She led the way toward a tangle of thorns at the edge of her territory. It began to get harder and harder to swerve by the swelling amount of flesh-eaters.

"This way!" Leopardstar yowled over her shoulder, dodging a flesh-eater's bite. Lilypatch backed up and herded the cats through, kicking the flesh-eaters back and out of the way. Finally, we made it to the thorns; a tunnel was formed in it and Leopardstar stood in the entrance. "Go, go, go!" She hissed and I ducked in with cats on

my heels.

Without realizing it, we came to a cave. A few cracks above made it bright enough to at least see where we were stepping. It started to get crammed up quickly. My fur stood on end.

A tiny squeal came from behind me and I flinched as a mouse tried scatter away. I had it by the tail and I made sure it didn't go anywhere. I nipped it in the neck and held it up. *I can't eat it here, they'll all notice and probably feed me to the flesh-eaters... Play it cool. Give it to the youngest.*

I spotted Heatherleg laying down with Sunkit at her stomach and Lighteningice and her two kits, Sootkit and Stormkit, laying on the other side of them.

With a low sigh, I gave it to Lighteningice. She looked up with shock and I dipped my head. "Thank you," she whispered and Heatherleg laid in behind her.

I didn't reply, just backed slightly up to where I could be alone. I muffled a sigh as the scent of Birdfeather came to me.

"I'm going to sleep, okay?" She trembled and I nodded. The swelled up she-cat nuzzled herself into my stomach as I laid down. *Whatever, I'm going to sleep anyway.* Birdfeather kept trying to move in closer but I didn't move to comfort her. *Why should I make her feel good? It wouldn't work anyway.*

Leopardstar nudged me - in what seemed to be only heartbeats, which was actually from daylight to midnight - and I groaned. "What?" I mumbled angrily, blinking my eyes open.

"Everyone is asleep other than me and Lilypatch and we can't keep the flesh-eaters back much longer. I know this is stupid to ask *you*, but we need an idea." She growled and I stood up slowly, careful not to wake Birdfeather.

"Look, I don't know. Did you put rocks in front of it?" I muttered, my voice slightly bouncing off the empty rocks. "We have thought of that but there aren't many in here. I cleaned them out for

emergencies, like putting many cats in here,"

I sighed and looked around. My eyes caught sight of something hanging from the cracks in the ceiling. "Is there a hill or something above this?" I whispered, padding toward it.

Leopardstar padded in beside me. "Yes, I think ivy or some vines have grown down. I thought of that, but I don't know if it'll be strong enough," I nodded and jumped up, grabbed some with my teeth and broke it off, landing swiftly.

Moans came from the entrance and Lilypatch groaned. "Hurry guys, I think more found us!" She hissed and Leopardstar and I quickly grabbed more.

I picked them up from the ground and ran to the entrance. The cave was crowded behind me. The thorn tunnel was covered half way into it, giving us more room.

"We should cover more up when we finish entwining these with that." I suggested and they nodded.

Leopardstar took lead - again - and tightly put the vines from one side to the other of the entrance. It was up against the barrier holding the flesh-eaters back. Lilypatch took the other vines from her while Leopardstar held the barrier back. Leopardstar's claws dug into the cold mud underneath our paws. The cave was more like a burrow, a huge, wide burrow.

The moans grew stronger and claws reached through the deep thorns. Lilypatch finished and we backed up, grabbing the thorns quickly and crossing from one side to the other.

We used the vines I had to hold the thorns together and then took more from the dense thorn branches and twisted them together. The first barrier wasn't holding as well as we had planned and the two more we had done wasn't going to do either.

"We need an escape route." Lilypatch growled as we tied the vines into the thorns.

An idea popped in my head. *I am brilliant!*

"We should dig a deepish hole to slow them down right in front of the barrier keeping them out. Then we should dig a hole to get out and we'll be good to go if the flesh-eaters come in," I insisted, smirking inwardly at how smart I was.

"Okay, I'll get a few warriors to help," Lilypatch whispered, padding away.

Leopardstar and I turned away and started digging away at the muddy ground. I made sure the mud didn't go spraying behind me by putting it in my paws and into a pile beside the hole. Not long after we started, Boldfang and Mudpaw started to help.

We kept digging down until I almost slipped into the hole. It had to be almost my height if I were to be on my hind legs. I backed up carefully, putting my front paws on the other side of the hole and jumping back.

I left Leopardstar and Squirreltail to dig. Meanwhile, Boldfang and Mudpaw followed me to the opposite side of the crowded burrow. Lilypatch and Viperslash were already there. A pile of dirt formed at each of their sides. My paws ached from all of the digging and I could feel mud stuck in between my claws.

I started digging, but as soon as I got even a whisker length in, dirt would fall back down. I flicked an ear in frustration and turned to Lilypatch. They looked confused as well. "Maybe put mud over it?" I shook my head simply at Viperslash's suggestion.

"It wouldn't hold and it would take too long." I growled and we went silent.

After a few heartbeats of quiet, Lilypatch mewed, "Maybe dig up until the top of the hill comes to us and then make a pile of packed down dirt and use that as the trail to get out?" I rolled my eyes, turned around.

Okay miss smarty fur, take the lead! Looks like you have all the ideas, don't ya?

"Alright, good plan." I lied with a hateful grin. Of course, she would

think it was nice, but really, it was not.

The three of us started digging frantically, just in case the flesh-eaters broke through. Throughout the night, Viperslash, Lilypatch and I made a tunnel to the top of the burrow and created a wide - yet steep - path up.

I finished it by packing it down, using my paw to pat it down thick. By then, the sun was creeping up the sky. Red and pink were mixed up and beautiful. I could see clouds dotting the sky above, seeming to be grey and filled with rain.

The moaning came from down in the burrow and I had to look away. *Please don't be coming through...* I thought, cringing as I opened my eyes to the sudden sight of nothing but cats peacefully sleeping and Squirreltail and Leopardstar finishing with digging. The hole was at least two cats tall, if they were on all fours.

I padded down the dirt trail and to Leopardstar. Her tail was out of the hole while the rest of her body was in. Dirt was piling up behind her and I had to dodge it so I didn't get any on me.

Squirreltail was at the bottom of the hole, bringing paws filled with dirt to the top. "I think you have made it deep enough," I mewed and the two looked up.

Leopardstar backed away, shaking her fur out while Squirreltail hopped out. "Just needed to make sure it was deep enough." Squirreltail muttered, cleaning her fur. I always adored her. Her eyes were bigger than an average cats' and her tail was a fluffy one, fur bright red like a fox or a red squirrel.

I turned away and sat down. The moaning of the flesh-eaters would wake everyone up soon, especially now that the sun was coming up. Leopardstar came to sit beside me.

"We should set out a patrol quickly." Leopardstar whispered. I narrowed my eyes, *I'll announce it and they'll think I made the decision and then they would trust* me *more. Brilliant! Why thank you.* I purred inwardly and nodded to Leopardstar, nudging Squirreltail and then Viperslash. I told them we should hunt before the cats woke up and

they nodded, saying bye to Lilypatch.

We stalked out of the emergency exit and quickly and quietly stalked through the dense forest behind DarkClan. Here, we were close to Twolegplace but not as close as SpiritClan was. Luckily, back here there were more thorns than in a nightmare, wrapping around the trees and bushes forming everywhere. We would be lucky if we go back with only a few in our paws.

The apprentices had named it Dead Wood. There was barely any prey, no dangerous animals and no feral cats. Personally, I loved it, and we battled for it many times. DarkClan *always* won, though.

We trekked through the pointy woods, avoiding contact with the thorns sticking out of every edge of the Dead Wood. I parted my jaws in search of any kind of prey and pricked my ears up to locate any sound. Squirreltail stopped, sniffed around and stalked away. My instinct told me to follow her but I didn't want her to feel awkward.

I was sure Viperslash had her wrapped around his tail by now anyway. That little selfish cat thought he could take any she-cat. I narrowed my eyes at the tom's back and stalked toward the smell of a vole. We were lucky to find anything here.

My nose was suddenly whipped by smells everywhere. Big animals and small animals collided and were sent up my nose. Viperslash gave me a confused look.

"The prey must've gotten the same idea," I murmured, stalking toward a rabbit. You *never* see rabbits here.

"Collect as many as you can!" I hissed to the LightClan warrior.

He dipped his head and ran off, charging at a squirrel. I jumped at the rabbit and it ran. I tried to run after it, but its small body maneuvered around the thorns easier than any cat could. It disappeared.

I paused and listened for movement. A dove landed at least five tail-lengths away, pecking away at a seed. Stalking forward, I suddenly

cringed as a thorn stabbed my paw. I lifted my paw slightly - ignoring the pain - and jumped onto the dove and killed it with a swift bite to the neck. I carried it away, burying it and stalking toward another smell.

A mouse was scrambling away from Squirreltail and I jumped at it just as she got caught in a thorn bush. I killed it and set it down. "Thanks!" She mumbled, untangling her red fur from the thorns.

I dipped my head and padded away.

*****

Throughout the morning, Viperslash, Squirreltail and I had lost more than we caught. The dense woods were harder than I thought to get through, especially when the prey would take off. Though we did catch an even amount.

I carried a rabbit, mouse and the dove while Squirreltail carried two mice and a vole. Vipeslash managed to catch a snake, a mouse and two pigeons. The thorn remained in my pad so I had to limp my way toward the den. I ducked into the den first and we were greeted by shocked faces.

"You three took all morning! Where were you?" Leopardstar hissed and I shrugged her off. Lilypatch sniffed the two warriors and I set down the prey. Viperslash and Squirreltail did the same.

"We kept getting tangled by thorns." Viperslash growled and Squirreltail nodded, shaking out her knotted fur. I could've sworn a thorn went flying as she did so. Redfur and Poppyheart examined Squirreltail, picking out the thorns from her thick pelt. I raised my paw for Poppyheart to pick out the thorn after she left Squirreltail to be treated by her brother, Redfur.

Birdfeather wobbled over, worry filling her gaze. I groaned inwardly. "I'm so glad you're alright!" She purred and I rolled my eyes as she nuzzled me. Poppyheart glared at me and I looked away, avoiding eye contact.

"You should eat," Poppyheart whispered to the queen. Birdfeather

hesitated and I nodded, sending her off. Poppyheart tried to talk to me, but I spoke before she could.

"Eat up what we have. We may not have this much fresh-kill for a while."

Chapter 6

I was awakened by a sudden squeal. *Sunkit shut up...* I moaned, rolling away. Poppyheart's reassuring mew came from just whiskers away and my eyes shot open. *Birdfeather's having her kits! No, come on! They'll only attract more flesh-eaters...*

I stood up. Whipping around, I saw Poppyheart and Redfur working to help her. A kit was already by her belly.

"Just one more kit to go, Birdfeather," Redfur murmured in her ear. She groaned and glared at the LightClan medicine cat. Just like that, another kit was born. *Do I have to name them?* I wondered, padding over. I felt a bit happy, seeing two squeaking bundles squirming at Birdfeather's belly.

Their fur was wet and their eyes were closed. One was brown with grey paws, the other was completely black.

"You should name them," Birdfeather puffed. I swallowed. *I knew I'd have to.*

"The black one is a tom, the brown one is a she-kit," Poppyheart mewed. I nodded, thinking.

"The black one should be Ebonykit. The brown one should be Otterkit." Birdfeather nodded, her eyes glittering with love. "Ebonykit and Otterkit it is." She whispered, licking her kits' pelts. I nodded, my chest warming up as they suckled and pushed at each other.

Cats gathered around her and I was thankful. It was almost awkward. I backed away and bumped into Leopardstar. Her eyes were hard and dark as she towered over me.

"You don't like her, do you?" Leopardstar growled. I shrugged, standing straight and padding around her. "Well you should tell her before her heart gets broken!" I kept padding away and halted at

the barrier. It was caving in.

"We need to fix the barrier," I hissed, looking over my shoulder at Leopardstar, "It's caving in."

"Whatever." She muttered, grabbing the last vine hanging from the cracks above.

I watched her as she carefully made her way across the narrow bridge to the barrier. I smirked as I noticed her tail trembling. I jumped as I turned around to see Bluewave. She dipped her head and watched Leopardstar with me.

"Lovely names you chose," Bluewave meowed. I nodded, "I hope they survive this mess."

Silence came after that. All I could hear was moaning and the delighted chatter of the kits. Sunkit, Sootkit and Stormkit were asking Birdfeather questions and trying to get at the two new kits.

Lighteningice guided them gently away with her tail. As the kits left, Whitetooth took their place, chatting up a storm with Birdfeather.

Jealousy crept into my heart and my tail whipped. As much as I had begun to dislike Birdfeather, she was still *my* mate. Not Whitetooth's.

I growled low and turned away quickly. The two kits came to mind and I started thinking about them. *Otterkit seems like she'll be more social and quick, Ebonykit seems like he'll be the kind of cat who jumps into a fight, no questions asked.*

If we do get attacked by flesh-eaters, which would I grab? Otterkit is a serious possibility but Ebonykit might be stronger and braver. Otterkit or Ebonykit? I'm sure I will find a way to grab them both. I wondered, narrowing my eyes.

I watched the barrier as it bounced and began to cave in. Leopardstar's new vine wasn't going to hold up much longer, I feared.

A bloody face stuck out to me. The torn up face of it made it hard for me to make out who it was. I narrowed my eyes harder, trying to pin-point whom it was. But no name came to mind. It bugged me greatly that I couldn't make out who it was, or who it used to be anyway. Reluctantly, I pushed it to the back of my mind and stood up.

A paw reached through the brambles and thorns. It was the cat that I couldn't name. It's eyes were bloody and as grey as the moon. It's paws were black and it's fur was grey. It dawned on me; it was Oceantail. I felt a sudden... *explosion* in my chest. It was guilt and did I ever hate that feeling. I pushed the feeling aside and turned away.

Oceantail's flesh-eating body groaned and was shoved harder into the barrier. Her muzzle grazed the thorns and ripped as easy as a kit were to be scared. She was shoved harder into the barrier and I felt trapped, like her and I were the only ones here. "Help! Help!" A voice said in my head and I twitched, staring harder at her.

Her moaning made me cringe and I bared my teeth. "Why didn't you help me? Skyclaw and I would've been so much help!" She seemed to call. My ear twitched.

"Reedstar! Reedstar!" She hissed and I growled, "Shut up. Shut *up*!" I felt a shove in my side and I stumbled into the dirt wall. Bluewave and a few others were gathered around, "Reedstar?" Bluewave murmured, "Are you alright?"

They can't know what I saw. If they did, I'd either be killed on the spot for being insane or they'd choose Leopardstar as their final leader. I have to act natural.

I nodded, padding away. "Of course, I just was... growling at them. I don't know, I just despise them." I lied, well it wasn't *exactly* a lie but it was mostly one.

Bluewave and Cloudjaw exchanged worried and concerned glances. I shrugged it off and padded to the back of the burrow. Thankfully, Birdfeather was talking to Whitetooth. It was only good for one reason: she didn't have to blab on to me.

*****

Three sunrises went by and the barrier was braking more and more. *Only StarClan knows why it hasn't collapsed yet.* In those few sunrises, I had suggested to go with Leopardstar and a few other strong warriors to kill off some of the roaming flesh-eaters. I had preferred to do the barrier and only the barrier, but Leopardstar took a few others with her to kill the ones around.

Of course, they thought it was *such* a good idea. I thought, you know, maybe we should *save* our energy? But no! Leopardstar has the good ideas.

Meanwhile, Ebonykit and Otterkit had opened their eyes. They squeal every night in fear. They weren't really any bigger and they didn't really talk much either, but one things for sure: they ate a lot.

Since the prey had scattered to the only safe place, we got lots of prey. They were better at avoiding thorns, though. Every time we came back from a hunt, our paws and pelts are torn and punctured with small, sharp thorns. It was a wonder that no one had caught an infection; there were no herbs that were worth anything. Though, it wasn't like the only medicine cats we had ever went out to get any. Poppyheart and Redfur only set out once to get medicine. They say there aren't many and they have to wait for more to grow, but really, I think they're cowards.

I stood up, feeling cool and refreshed. The sun had already come up and I felt alarmed. *No one woke me?* I thought, anger creeping up inside of me. *Wow! I'm the true leader, and the smart one! Why didn't they wake me up?*

But I soon realized no one else was awake. The moaning was as loud as usual, the sun was blaring into the burrow, yet soft snoring came from Squirreltail and Snowpaw. I twitched an ear and stepped over the bodies.

I stepped over Whitetooth - who was curled up, back to Cloudjaw and a paw-step away from Birdfeather - and he uncurled himself a bit, almost hitting me. I hopped over him and then swerved around Mudpaw - who was cuddled up beside Snowpaw - and he too, moved and almost hit me.

I growled and jumped over Lilypatch, Squirreltail and Sharppaw without getting touched.

I looked over my shoulder at Squirreltail, her red fluffy tail laid over her nose and her tall legs under her chin. I started to walk again. *I can actually have some time to myself!* I thought and just like that, I stepped on a cats tail. I groaned and shot my paw off of it as quick as a squirrel could climb a tree.

Glancing down, I met eyes with the cat I woke up. Boldfang glared up at me and rolled over, tucking his thick tail over his nose. "Sorry," I muttered, going out the emergency exit. As I made my way up, I heard paw steps padding over the muddy floor.

"Wait," he whispered, running up to me. I sighed but said nothing, sitting just outside the burrow. He sat down and before he could say anything I asked, "Why didn't anyone wake up? It's the middle of the day!"

Through narrowed eyes, I watched him shrug. "I don't know but I noticed Viperslash and Venomsoul aren't there." Boldfang meowed. He seemed to be growling, but I realized that was his natural voice; it was just that deep.

I nodded but didn't reply, gazing out into the Dead Woods. There were only hunched over skinny trees with few leafless bushes. There was no sign of Venomsoul and Viperslash. "Maybe they woke up together and went out for an early hunt?" Boldfang suggested and I shrugged.

"Hmm... well if they come back with nothing and no real reason for them being gone, I'll lose it." I hissed, keeping my eyes forward. Boldfang tilted his head to the side. I could see him watching me out of the corner of my eyes.

"Why?" He mewed.

"For one, they didn't tell anyone that they were going out. That's just mouse-brained. For two, why would they be out if their plan wasn't to hunt?"

Boldfang just nodded and turned his head forward. We sat in silence for only a few moments before a sudden snap came from inside. I whipped around and dashed into the den. I could feel my heart beating faster. As I entered the burrow, my heart lurched into my throat.

The barrier was snapping and bloody, furless paws were reaching for the sleeping cats. Thank StarClan I'm up to save everyone!

"Wake up!" I screamed and cats jumped in horror. Groggy faces turned to face me, bewildered and frightened. "The barrier is down! Run!" I yelled and I looked toward the flesh-eaters.

By the time I had managed to scream, there was a hole in the barrier. Bloodthirsty creatures stumbled into the hole and I knew, before too long, they would be climbing over each other to get out of the hole.

"Go! Go! Go!" I yowled and cats stumbled out drowsily. Everyone's fur was spiked up and in knots, and I wasn't sure if it was from the rush or from their sleep. "I'll lead them away," I growled to Leopardstar. She seemed to hesitate but dipped her head and pushed them along as I passed cats.

I led the way with cats at my heels. I didn't dare look behind me.

Screeches echoed from inside the burrow and then yells from Leopardstar. Those screams were from she-cats and I felt like I knew who it was but right now, that didn't matter.

Leaving the burrow and not being eaten was all that mattered.

Chapter 7

I tore away, my sides hitting the trees and thorn bushes. I hissed as a thorn sliced open my paw and hissed as each time my paw hit the ground, the thorn stabbed farther into my paw. I pushed the thought of that kind of pain and began to think, *If I don't stop worrying about the thorn, I'll get eaten! I can't leave the group unguarded... they need me.*

I pushed harder until we came to a huge tree. It was a dead, thick tree with thick branches sticking out of every place on the trunk. I didn't even stop to tell them I was going up, I just leaped up and shot myself up to the nearest branch.

One after one, cats climbed up the tree. In my head, I counted up the names of who was here and who wasn't.

There's Heatherleg with Sunkit. I thought to myself as the long legged she-cat clawed her way to the branch above me. *Boldfang, Redfur and Poppyheart. Mudpaw, Snowpaw. Squirreltail and Blackpaw.*

My heart raced as she shot up the tree, far away from me. I was hoping she was alive still.

I saw a group of flesh-eaters rushing toward the tree with the rest of the cats. Relief flooded over me as Leopardstar, Cloudjaw, Whitetooth, Lighteningice and Lilypatch rushed toward us. Whitetooth and Lighteningice held Stormkit and Sootkit in their jaws. I could hear their whines from down below.

I was only relieved because Leopardstar, Whitetooth and Cloudjaw were strong and we needed strong warriors. After Venomsoul and Viperslash had apparently ditched us, we needed all the power we could get.

Suddenly I realized Birdfeather and our two kits were no where to be found. I stood up, my heart in my throat. I tried to swallow the feeling but no matter what, it returned. I noticed Cloudjaw had a

bundle of fur in his jaws. My heart skipped a beat when I recognized the black fur as Ebonykit.

I knew something was up when I had left. Birdfeather - nor Otterkit - showed up, Bluewave and Sharppaw weren't anywhere to be found either. Cloudjaw perched beside me with a wriggling Ebonykit. "I'm sorry," He whispered, "We couldn't get to them in time. I was lucky to even get out alive with Ebonykit." The white deputy's eyes were wide with horror and misery. I stared at Ebonykit at my paws. He let out tiny mewls of terror, unable to speak just yet. I laid down with him. All of the guilt and dread seemed to have washed away. There was nothing, not even sadness for Birdfeather, or even thankfulness for Ebonykit being alive.

As the cats settled, I looked around. Mudpaw nuzzled Snowpaw gently, grooming her knotted white pelt in an attempt to soothe the frightened apprentice. Poppyheart comforted Lighteningice and her two kits, while Whitetooth sat as quiet and still as a rock.

Leopardstar laid with her paws off the edge of the branch, eyes clouded with dread and sorrow. *Could I... Make her step down now? Maybe she'll agree without knowing and then she can't argue?*

The moaning below came louder and then paws were scrapping the tree trunk, chunks of bark falling onto them. The branch was high enough that they couldn't get me, so I felt a bit more at ease next to Ebonykit.

I put my head on the base of the branch - where it came out of the tree trunk - and went to sleep with my son at my belly.

I watched myself run away and my heart skipped a beat, *Where is he going? Why won't he help us?* A thought came to mind and I didn't even think it. Flesh-eaters poured in as much as the warriors poured out, leaving us behind.

The two kits huddled up at my stomach squealed, attracting more flesh-eaters. Bluewave and Sharppaw clawed at them, stuck in the back, as I stayed in the corner, frozen with fear. I tried to move forward but I couldn't; it was as if I was watching a memory.

Then it hit me: *I'm inside of Birdfeather's mind.*

Cloudjaw came leaping over bloody flesh-eaters, his claws unsheathed and ready for the snapping jaws. The white tom hurried to the corner Birdfeather cowered in and snagged the first kit he could get to, Ebonykit. Otterkit curled up by herself and whimpered with her eyes closed. There was a deep pang in my heart as I watched - through Birdfeather's eyes - Cloudjaw nuzzle the queens face and dive over the herd. She tucked kit into a corner as far as her little body could go and stood in front of her. Flesh-eaters over ran the burrow and tore up Blueclaw and Sharppaw and finally, Birdfeather.

She had tried to push them back but they grabbed her. Otterkit screamed for Birdfeather, but she was gone and they were next.

Flesh-eaters stumbled quickly out of the burrow and followed the others and that's when I blacked out, only to be met with more danger.

"Reedstar! Reedstar!" A hiss came from above and I jolted awake, eyes barely open.

"What? What!" I growled and Cloudjaw pointed to the ground. Moaning registered into my ears and I realized what was going on.

I looked down and shot up, standing as far away from them as I could. Tons of flesh-eaters were trying to grab at my tail and paws. I gasped and took Ebonykit up to the next branch as a flesh-eater grabbed the branch I was on. There were so many that they had piled upon each other and were then able to grab the lowest branch. The infected cat didn't stay on it for more than a heartbeat before it tumbled onto the others.

I sat on the same branch as Leopardstar. *Great. She's going to accuse me for running away. What do I say if that's the case?* I wondered but she didn't even look at me. I sat on the branch beside the bulky DarkClan leader. We all watched in silence as the flesh-eaters tried to get at us, teeth bared and claws unsheathed.

"What do we do now?" Lighteningice whispered and I could hear

confused mews as she swept her kits to her belly. I thought for a heartbeat. There was no plan to this at all. *What do we do? We're going to either starve to death or go crazy. We can't stay here any longer then we have to. Think Reedstar, think!* But nothing came to mind. "What *do* we do?" I hissed and Leopardstar looked over at me, her expression blank.

"You seem to think you have all the ideas. Spit it out you selfish fox-lover." She growled low to me and I narrowed my eyes. I couldn't think of anything to say back. Looking away, I watched the flesh-eaters growl and try to get at us with their paws raised, eager and desperate for flesh.

"I- I don't know what to do." I stammered quietly, finally answering Leopardstar.

I felt her stare into my soul and it took all my strength not to look over at her. She kept staring at me until finally, Poppyheart and Redfur broke the silence between us.

"Alright! Break time is over! We need to find a way to get them away from us before night-fall." Redfur growled and I looked up. Poppyheart nodded in agreement. "Right, someone has to distract them from the tree. Leopardstar, Lilypatch, Reedstar, do any of you know another safe place to go to?" Poppyheart asked and we all exchanged glances.

There was a moment of groaning as the few of us remained quiet. Lilypatch was the first to suggest something. "There is a gorge at the edge of the LightClan territory, it's what ended our territory. If we're lucky, we can get to the other side somehow and-" The grey she-cat mewed and I stopped her before she could say anymore of her mouse-brained idea!

"'Get to the other side somehow' you say? How in StarClan's name could we get over that wide and deep gorge? It's suicide!" I argued, my fur standing on edge.

Think, Reedstar! Think of another place to go before this mouse-brain convinces them to go there! "*That's* suicide? Every other plan you've had was suicide, Reedstar!" Leopardstar yelled and I stood up.

"My plans were better than yours! We lasted three sunrises and then look what happened! If I had gotten us to somewhere high or remote, instead of that dumb burrow in Dead Woods, we would've been *just fine*!" I snarled back. She unsheathed her claws and shoved her muzzle in my face. I shoved mine right back at her.

"All you want is warriors to protect you, you don't care who lives or dies! Look at you, you haven't showed that you cared since your mate and other kit died, meanwhile Whitetooth is dying of grief! How could you *ever* call yourself a leader when all you care about is yourself? A real leader puts themselves first rather than their Clan!" Leopardstar growled, jaw clenched with fury.

I hoped that she had kept her voice quiet enough for just the two of us to hear, but I knew the others had heard it. I looked around frantically and she shoved me back before I could come up with a comeback.

"Step down, Reedstar before you get yourself hurt." She growled, backing away from me.

I can't argue anymore or she'll rip my tongue out... I'll have to live with Lilypatch's idea. I dipped my head and Lilypatch continued.

Leopardstar nodded to Lilypatch and she continued. "There are a few big, dead trees just on the edge of the gorge. We could push them down and get to the other side. It won't have many flesh-eaters there since the lake is down-hill from there," Lilypatch explained. "We could get prey from the lake or hill. It would be tricky to get everyone over but it would be worth it."

I kept my mouth shut even though I wanted to cuff her ear and rip it off. She was *way* too mouse-brained and untrained to be telling us where to go!

"Good idea. Say 'I' if you agree with Lilypatch's idea." Poppyheart announced and almost everyone said I. Only Snowpaw, Mudpaw, Squirreltail, and I kept out mouths closed. *So she's smarter than I thought...*

"It sounds stupid. What will we do if we get separated or if the dead

trees aren't long enough or if they collapse before we get to go there? The tree trunks could be so dead that it would snap under our weight." Mudpaw argued and I smirked. *So he* isn't *mouse-brained. All though, all he does is gaze at Snowpaw who isn't any smarter and stronger than a dead mouse.*

Squirreltail nodded and I smirked harder. *Yes! She agrees with me!*

"As much as I want to agree with you four, there isn't another place to go. Which will it be: risk it or die?" Leopardstar growled, giving me a glare. I looked away from her stare.

"Reedstar, you're a leader, too. You should choose for us." Squirreltail mewed, leaning over her branch. Her flaming amber eyes shone brightly and I tried not to stare too long into them. The wind blew brilliantly through her long fur. Her long, fluffy, red tail was curled at her front paws.

I looked away and glanced at my paws. *Think smart to make them respect me...*

"We should tag along with them, but when they cross, let them go first since it was their idea *and* since we're just that nice," I replied after a bit of thinking. It wasn't the best answer, but they'd buy it as not selfish.

"Alright. It's settled, we leave tomorrow?" Redfur meowed and Blackpaw cut in, "Woah, we have to leave before night-fall." I could feel how empty my stomach was suddenly. It felt like teeth were gnawing at it.

"Well how will we do that?" Heatherleg scoffed. I hadn't heard her voice since the last Gathering. It was rough and raspy as if she hadn't of talked in moons.

"I don't know!" Blackpaw hissed, "Maybe we could throw a branch or make a walk way from tree to tree! Either way, I can't sleep on this tree anymore, especially with nothing to eat."

Shaking my head, I sarcastically gasped, "That's almost so stupid it's brilliant!" Glaring up at the apprentice, he glared at me back. I

looked away again and sighed.

"Reedstar's right. Maybe we could jump from tree to tree?" Squirreltail suggested and I looked up. She didn't look at me but was instead narrowing her eyes at Leopardstar. Leopardstar thought for a moment and so did Poppyheart.

"We wouldn't be able to," Redfur insisted, flicking his tail to the tree beside us. "Most of us will fall to our deaths. Literally. We're better off leading them away somehow."

I groaned. "Right and who would do that for us?"

"I will."

Chapter 8

"I will." Whitetooth mumbled. Shocked, everyone glanced his way. "Whitetooth?" I hissed; I was astonished. "Is this because of Birdfeather?" My voice was low and my tail flicked to and fro. In the corner of my eye, I noticed Ebonykit's ears perk up.

The white tom stared at the ground, numb. Without looking at anyone, he replied, "Kind of. I am infected anyway, though for some reason I haven't started throwing up blood yet, but I am feeling nauseated. I'll go." Whitetooth explained and Cloudjaw shook his head, shoving him playfully.

"Ha! Good one, Whitetooth." Cloudjaw retorted but Whitetooth's expression didn't change. His brother was slumped over as he slowly looked over at the SpiritClan deputy. "Right, Whitetooth?" Cloudjaw croaked as Whitetooth dipped his head to us, climbing down the tree to my branch. I watched Cloudjaw swallow down a whimper as he witnessed the last of his kin sacrifice himself. Leopardstar reached for him, sorrow in her stern green eyes. "Let him go," I muttered to Leopardstar.

"I'll keep them back as long as I can, go! Try to be quiet!" Whitetooth yelled and jumped down. "Come and get me!" He yowled over his shoulder as flesh-eaters raced after him. He kept screaming things as he pelted away, halting to wait for them to catch up and then dashing off again.

When the herd of infected was out of earshot, I hissed, "Go, go!" With Ebonykit in my jaws, I began to climbing down. "Be quiet and follow me!" My voice was muffled from my kits scruff, but I knew they had heard me. Leopardstar came in beside me and I rushed away. Cats filed in behind me and her.

"Where to?" I asked Leopardstar. She didn't reply right away. Impatiently, I insisted,"Well?" Peeking briefly over my shoulder, I counted the cats as they ran after me: Cloudjaw was beside Lilypatch, Poppyheart and Redfur bounded at the rear, Blackpaw

herded Lighteningice who was holding Stormkit. Blackpaw held Sootkit and Heatherleg held Sunkit. I spotted Boldfang, Squirreltail, Mudpaw and Snowpaw on one side, charging through the maze of trees a bit away from the group.

"Reedstar!" Leopardstar's growl made me look ahead. "I said, we'll head into LightClan and go straight for the gorge!"

"Alright!" I hissed at her, taking off more swiftly. Flesh-eaters dotted the pine woods, heads down and tails trailing behind them. They swayed and stumbled around the pine trees and dying birches.

We pelted hard through the pine forest until we came to the marsh. The marsh was drying up - mud was everywhere, making it hard to run. Flesh-eaters were all over the ground and by the looks of it, they were sinking in the mud. They snapped at us but they were stuck, so we kept going with our eyes forward. One was actually a dog, sunken to his chest. The big, grey dog looked like a deer with its small head and pointy muzzle. I lifted my chin high to avoid getting Ebonykit dirty.

I looked over my shoulder to see the group still there, with everyone in it. Except Whitetooth. *What a shame, he could've been useful.* I thought, turning around again.

We just came to LightClan's old territory when I thought I was going to collapse. I wasn't used to running like LightClan and DarkClan. I slowed to a stop in the thick grass of the moor. The sun was covered with dark clouds. I wondered if it would rain. *A nice rain storm would be nice, I'm going to hate cleaning my pelt!*

"Leopardstar..." I puffed, taking in big gulps. I set Ebonykit down. The young tom fluffed out his fur and stretched. "I think I'm going to collapse... We have to stop," She looked over at me with annoyance but said nothing.

"Carry me or something!" I whined at her. She rolled her eyes. My legs burned like they were on fire, my stomach was cramping up and my vision was going dark. "Halt!" Leopardstar ordered to the group. Instead of halting, Boldfang tripped over his own foot and tumbled into the long grass. A beautiful yellow butterfly fluttered

away as Boldfang recovered.

I saw Blackpaw stumbling to the ground, wheezing and gasping for air. I caught sight of Poppyheart who was also collapsing. As for Cloudjaw, he had already fallen and was taking huge gulps of air.

"We aren't used to running like you are," I panted. "I noticed." Leopardstar muttered, looking away. I could tell that she too was breathing heavily.

"Ugh." I groaned, falling backwards again. "Let me rest..." Ebonykit attacked my tail and chased it as it twitched around. *He's too young to understand the grave danger we are in. I'll let him play.*

"No. We need to keep moving before the flesh-eaters find us. Besides, you could use the exercise." Lilypatch teased, narrowing her eyes at me.

I sat up again and stood up. My legs were wobbly and the cramp suddenly appeared when I started walking. I snatched up Ebonykit as we headed off.

"If someone doesn't carry me, I'm going to end up falling and then you're all doomed." I hissed to Leopardstar. She smirked and shrugged, murmuring in my ear, "*We're* doomed? No no, *you* will be. I won't be risking *anyone* to get *your* butt saved."

A growl crept up my throat but I didn't say anything more. Flesh-eaters moaned at us, trying to catch up to us as we trotted away. I could feel my neck becoming sore from holding Ebonykit's weight up for the long run.

I started to trot but the cramp came back. Wincing, I thought, *Just run it off...* The cramp refused to leave and by then, I was on the ground again. Redfur hurried to my side. I expected him to examine me, but he grabbed Ebonykit and the group continued on without me. "Come on, we have to go." Leopardstar hissed and I shook my head. I felt like I was going to heave. *If I'm sick they'll think I'm infected... Hold it together Reedstar!*

"I can't..." I panted, looking up at her. "My legs won't bring me

anywhere and I think I'm going to pass out..."

"Leopardstar," Boldfang muttered, nudging her. "Flesh-eaters are on their way. They must've heard us or smelt our trail. We're going to continue on." I looked in behind the group and so did everyone else.

Sure enough, flesh-eaters were stumbling toward us. Not many because of the mud, but there were a few more than our group. "What do we do? I can't walk and you can't just *leave* me and what's left of my Clan behind. We're cats, like you." I murmured, giving Leopardstar a hopeful glance.

"Actually, it seems that the rest of your Clan has left you. And quit trying make me sorry for your selfishness, Reedstar! You couldn't care less if everyone else dies, as long as you're alright, you don't care." Leopardstar snapped loudly.

From a few tail-lengths ahead, Heatherleg glanced around nervously. "Leopardstar! Quiet down, the flesh-eaters will hear you!" The tall brown she-cat whispered with Sunkit's scruff in her mouth. The tiny golden kit let out a whimper. "Let's go, Heatherleg! I don't want to be eaten!"

"Either get up or I, too, am leaving you to fend for yourself. You're choice, Reedstar." Leopardstar muttered and Lilypatch nodded, hurrying away to catch up with the other cats.

I took in huge gulps of air. *Do I give myself more pain and walk it off with them... Or do I stay and wait and meet up with them?*

Chapter 9

And so it was settled. Leopardstar put Blackpaw over her shoulder and dashed off. I kept to the rear since I couldn't handle the pain, trotting carefully.

I looked over my shoulder and I instantly regretted it. Flesh-eaters were almost close enough to bite my tail off. *This is why I like the front better!* A growl threatened to escape my throat and I eased to a harder run as the group sped up.

Boldfang, Mudpaw, Snowpaw, and Squirreltail were in front of me. I wanted so badly to cuddle up with Squirreltail, safe from the infected. Her red fur was so fluffy and it looked so welcoming and warm. *I bet she thinks I'm great. I'd for name our kits Redkit, Flamekit or Foxkit. If they were black, I'd name them Crowkit or Nightkit.*

My thoughts were interrupted when the group halted.

I looked up and over the cats to see Leopardstar and Lilypatch pushing back flesh-eaters. "What's going on?" Snowpaw whispered to Mudpaw. "I think we've been caught in a jam," Mudpaw replied, getting down to a crouch.

Squirreltail turned around to me. "We have to help them, there are flesh-eaters coming from all directions!" She insisted. I shook my head and growled, "I knew this would happen, we have to leave, now! Screw them, I won't let myself be eaten alive!"

Squirreltail hesitated as I pelted away. Snowpaw ran after me and Mudpaw followed her. Squirreltail eventually followed me. "Reedstar! Where are you going?" Leopardstar yowled and I watched as she pushed a flesh-eater back into the gorge.

"I knew this would happen!" I yelled over my shoulder then turned back forward. I ran ahead, pushing the pain to the back of my mind. *A leg cramp should be the* least *of my worries!* I ran at the edge of the gorge until I found a steep pile of boulders.

It took me a while, but I managed to get up to the top. It was a flat boulder on top with other boulders under it. If I moved too much, it might collapse. Which would be deadly because the gorge isn't that far away from the left side of it.

Squirreltail, Mudpaw and Snowpaw scrambled up with me. Flesh-eaters stumbled toward us and my ears flattened to my head. And now if it collapsed, we'd either be eaten or fall to our death.

"Great, now we're stuck!" Mudpaw mumbled and Snowpaw started to vibrate in fear. *She's as sketchy as a mouse! I could say '*boo*' and she'd go flying!*

Flesh-eaters clawed at the boulders and moaned at us. I growled at them and bared my teeth, but no fear showed in their blind eyes. "What do we do now?" Mudpaw whispered and I shrugged. "Wait it out, I guess."

A sudden *boom* in the sky made us all look up. Thunder crackled and lightening shot through the air, and in the blink of an eye, it started pouring. The mud from our pelts basically melted off. My heart throbbed at the sudden thought of how Ebonykit was going to make out.

I sighed and slumped down. I looked through the moor to see Leopardstar and the rest of the group pushing flesh-eaters off the edge. Lilypatch and Boldfang pushed the dead trees down and with a loud *snap*, they fell and hit the other side.

Through the pouring rain, moaning of flesh-eaters and the river in the gorge, I heard Leopardstar and Lilypatch yowl, "Go, go, go! Run before it collapses!"

"Wow, great idea Reedstar! Now we're stuck with flesh-eaters while they get the remote place!" Squirreltail yowled, her fur bristling up out of rage.

"I thought it was the best idea. We were all doomed, they just had luck." I growled, narrowing my eyes to see better through the pouring rain.

Silence. I swear it's the worst thing ever. *Especially* if you like the one who is giving you it.

I watched Leopardstar shove cats onto the bridge and then her shove flesh-eaters back. The bridge was flimsy and it looked slippery. Redfur managed to get across safely with my kit in his jaws. Poppyheart was one of the last cats to cross it and she almost slipped off. She ran it off as if it hadn't mattered.

Finally, I spoke up. "We're going to have to meet up with them, and quick. We will have time if someone distracts them," I announced and Mudpaw and Snowpaw exchanged concerned glances.

"And who will be the distraction? What will they do?" Snowpaw whimpered, cowering down into Mudpaw's brown fur.

"Hmm..." I mumbled, smirking a crooked smile. "How about... *you*!" I hissed and just as I said 'you' I shoved Snowpaw down and into the crowd of flesh-eaters.

Chapter 10

Snowpaw's screech was the loudest I had ever heard. It echoed in my ears. "Help! Help me Mudpaw!" She screamed but I held Mudpaw back. I watched through emotionless eyes as the flesh-eaters tore at her thick white pelt. Blood stained it, forming splotches of crimson red.

Mudpaw reached for her extended paw. "Snowpaw! I'll save you!" Mudpaw yelled. Snowpaw reached for it but I batted Mudpaw's paw away. "No!" Snowpaw gurgled, blood dripping from her jaws.

"She's a goner, run!" I snarled, pushing Mudpaw forward.

"You're insane! You're a murderer! How could you? She's my best friend! Who in StarClan's name do you think you are?" Mudpaw yowled, holding his ground.

"Your name should've been Suicidestar! I can't believe you just shoved her down there to be eaten!" Squirreltail yelled, pelting past me with Mudpaw on her heels. I could have sworn I spotted hatred in her amber eyes.

Rain pelted down harshly and I ignored their comments on my decision. *It was for the best. She was slowing us down anyway!* I thought, running behind Squirreltail. *I might have to kill Mudpaw and my dear, dear Squirreltail. What if they tell Leopardstar? Why, I'd be killed in a heartbeat, no questions asked.*

Flesh-eaters turned our way and stumbled toward us. "We won't make it!" Squirreltail yowled, turning back the way we originally came - into LightClan's territory once again.

I followed her, Mudpaw at my heels. *Should I trip him and save Squirreltail and I?* I wondered, but before I got a chance to think about it, Squirreltail swerved off toward SpiritClan territory.

"Where are you going?" I called to her and she just kept pounding

onward, her tail moving like a wave in the wind.

"Yeah, Squirreltail! Where are we going?" Mudpaw called to us. *I swear I heard a voice crack as he talked. Like, come on. Snowpaw was bound to be killed eventually! Get over it you fox-hearted loser.*

I groaned and pelted onward, trying to run faster. My legs were tired out from the last run, and now I felt like I was going to collapse *for sure*. Right here, right now. And I knew if I did, no one would stop to help me.

I made sure I was breathing evenly as I followed Squirreltail. Just as I was slowing down, we came to the broken fence where Scar was mauled.

"Reedstar! No, help!" He screeched but I didn't come to his rescue. His voice echoed in my mind as I ran over the fence. Blood was stained on the wooden fence and chunks of fur and flesh were still remaining on the splintered wood. Flies buzzed around the remainder of his skeleton. As we passed, I could have sworn I noticed him twitch.

I looked forward again and Squirreltail halted. "It's blocked! There's too many!" She hissed and Mudpaw's eyes grew wide. Mine did too. Flesh-eaters were everywhere, stumbling around, waiting for their next victim. And we were on their menu.

"Reedstar, Mudpaw, Squirreltail! Up here!" A voice called to us from above. The voice sounded so familiar it made my fur stand on end.

I looked up to the top of the Twoleg nest. *The ditchers.*

Chapter 11

I'm still editing the chapters. I hope they are better than what they were before!
*****

Viperslash and Venomsoul were on top of a Twoleg nest. Wooden boxes were stacked up on the side of the wall so I ran to them to climb up.

"Where in StarClan's name were you? Why did you ditch us? I could kill you two right now!" I yelled as I scrambled up the tall, wet boxes.

Venomsoul shrugged and Viperslash rolled his eyes. "No one would wake up. We tried to warn Leopardstar and you about the barrier but no one would wake up, so we simply left." Viperslash mewed, shrugging it off as if it weren't a big deal.

"Are you three all that's left?" Venomsoul whispered as Squirreltail lifted Mudpaw onto the roof and climbed up herself.

I shook my head, answering before Mudpaw could blurt out what happened to Snowpaw. "No, there are still many cats but they crossed the gorge before we could." I answered, looking up to the sky.

"*Actually*, we would've been there too if you hadn't of run off." Squirreltail snapped, her tail fluffy lashing in anger. I ignored the comment and looked to the right, away from everyone else.

After a few moments of an awkward silence, I muttered, "It was the best decision at the time. They were bound to of been eaten."

"Mm-hmm, right." Squirreltail hissed.

"Well on that note, what do we do now?" Venomsoul asked after a few long heartbeats of silence. The infected cats and even two

Twolegs were clawing at the Twoleg den. Too mouse-brained to even consider the boxes. "We'll have to wait it out. We can't go anywhere now," I replied. No one else was going to say the truth, so I said what we all knew we were going to have to do.

"Hooray, waiting." Mudpaw whispered, his head down and paws shuffling.

The sound of groaning and rain beating on the roof filled my ears. If I fell asleep quickly, it'd be wonderful. But I highly doubted it.

The sun was beginning to drift down the sky. I wondered what Ebonykit was doing. *Is he thinking about me? Does he miss me? Or does he even know I am his father?* Thoughts whirled around in my brain as the rain slowly started to sprinkle until it stopped completely. I watched the sky turn pink and purple at the horizon line. Secretly, I wished I could see over the gorge to find out what was going on with them. *Are they grieving for us? Do they wonder what we're doing? Did they leave already or are they waiting until the morning?*

It was torture at it's finest.

I must've fallen asleep because I woke up when the moon was up at its highest point. The rain had come again, just drizzling.

Squirreltail and Mudpaw laid back-to-back, far away from where I was. Viperslash and Venomsoul were beside them, curled up and sleeping as well. The four of them were all on the point of the roof where the two parts of the roof met, the peek.

The moaning was gone for some reason. I slid down the somewhat steep roof to check out the flesh-eaters.

I looked over the edge of the roof and walked the edge. *Where are all the flesh-eaters?* I asked myself, scanning the ground. Not a soul nor an undead creature was in sight.

Hurrying over to the huddled cats, I nudged each of them as I meowed their names. "Squirreltail! Viperslash! Venomsoul! Mudpaw!" I tried to be quiet as the infected could simply be just

around the corner. Mudpaw stirred in his sleep but no one woke.

Becoming impatient, I unsheathed one claw and poked Mudpaw and then Squirreltail. "What?" Mudpaw squeaked in shock.

"Wake up! The flesh-eaters have wandered off!" I exclaimed and Viperslashs' head shot up. "Am I hearing you right? You've gone insane." Viperslash sneered, standing and skidding down the damp roof.

He let out a gasp as he peeked over the roof. "My great StarClan, you're right!" He called up the roof and Squirreltail sat up. His tail erected and when he turned around, his eyes were glazed with hope. "Let's go check it out," Venomsoul insisted, jumping down off the roof.

Viperslash and Squirreltail hopped down and Mudpaw and I stayed put. "I won't risk it," I murmured to myself, padding up the roof and over to the other side. Still no flesh-eaters.

I watched Venomsoul, Viperslash and Squirreltail depart from each other, stalking around corners and checking hiding places.

"Any flesh-eaters?" I hissed to the three warriors and they turned to Mudpaw and I. "Not a mouse-brain in sight!" Viperslash called back. Excitement was clear in his voice.

"Do you think it's over?" Mudpaw muttered, hope flooding his dark blue eyes. I shrugged, "Probably not, they might've heard something over night and left the Twolegplace." Mudpaw's eyes drained and he looked helpless. "At least for now we are safe." The young brown tom dipped his head.

Looking away, he sat down on the edge of the roof and watched Squirreltail, Viperslash and Venomsoul as they made their way to the fence that had fallen.

"Come on, we should go to LightClan's gorge now before they return." Squirreltail called up to us without looking at us. She kept going as if her suggestion was what was going to happen. I hopped down onto a metal, hollow box and then onto the ground. Mudpaw

followed, dragging his tail.

"Hurry, we don't want them to catch up to us." I growled, trotting out of the Twolegplace.

Chapter 12

We trotted out of the Twolegplace as quietly as we could. I wondered what made them disappear. *Did the group chase them out or something? Or did a non-infected Twoleg make a huge bang? They don't just wander off like that.*

I pushed it to the back of my mind as I caught sight of a single flesh-eater. "Avoid any flesh-eaters. We have nothing to fight them with this time," I warned and they nodded, stalking quietly around it. It seemed content just standing there anyway, moaning to itself.

Looking forward, I noticed we had came to a steep hill. Fresh mud was there as if a mudslide had occurred over night. "Do you think that's why the flesh-eaters are gone?" Mudpaw whispered, peeking over the edge.

"This is far from Twolegplace, something had to of drawn it out." I replied dryly, looking down the hill. Rocks jutted out of the steep hill with sticks and a small fallen tree laying on top. The rain must've made it fall. At the bottom of the hill were tons - and I mean *tons* - of flesh-eaters. Some lay still while the majority roamed around, dragging their paws through the thick muck.

Just beyond that, of course, was the gorge and the fallen tree bridge. No flesh-eater was trying to cross it, only StarClan knows why. *They're as dead in the brain as mice!*

Even with the massive rain storm each of the infected down the steep hill were covered from head to paw in mud. Groaning and growling, none of them seemed to care if it slipped into their mouths. "How are we supposed to get to the gorge with this mess?" Venomsoul spat, his ears plastered to his head, and we all shrugged.

"We could go around?" Squirreltail suggested, tail flicking in impatience.

I thought for a heartbeat. *It might work, but we don't know if it's empty*

or more filled with flesh-eaters... Maybe we could throw rocks to the side? They could be attracted to sound, since they look and act blind.

"Gather rocks and throw them to the side. Make as much noise over there as possible." I instructed and Squirreltail, Mudpaw and Viperslash trotted off. Venomsoul didn't move.

With a flick of my ears, I watched the dark grey tom sit and do nothing. "Aren't you going with them?" I mewed, narrowing my eyes, and Venomsoul glanced over at me. "I was about to ask you the same thing," He muttered and looked back to watch the flesh-eaters.

"Alright," I mused, unable to think of another thing to say. A few heartbeats of quiet caused my fur to bristle up until the tom finally spoke. I only relaxed for a moment. "So... I heard you killed Snowpaw?" Venomsoul murmured. I could tell he was avoiding eye contact. My fur remained up with a hostile feeling pulsing through me.

"Who said that?" Growling my reply, I found myself kneading my claws into the soft earth. My heartbeat sped up. *Which one spoke about me? I bet it was Mudpaw... Squirreltail would never...*

"I asked you a question. When you answer that, I'll answer you." Venomsoul answered evenly. He watched the trio kick rocks and the infected as they followed the noise.

I sighed but reluctantly, I spoke the truth. "Yes, but she was slowing us down anyway. Now answer mine." Venomsoul looked over at me and I swore a glint of hatred flashed in his pale green eyes. His eyes reminded me of snakes and their venom. *No wonder his mother named him Venomkit.* I thought, narrowing my eyes.

Venomsoul smirked and I tried not to look hostile. Venomsoul stood up and unsheathed his claws. Hostility made my tail bush up and my own claws slide out. "Snowpaw could've been a great warrior and you killed her? What did she ever do to you?" He snarled, taking a step forward.

"So what?" I sneered and he took another step forward. Baring my

teeth, I stood up and prepared for a fight. "Back off, Venomsoul, or I'll make you wish you had," I growled but he didn't back off.

I backed away a few more paces and Venomsoul followed. I noticed his muscles bunching up, ready to pounce. When Venomsoul finally lunged for me, I was ready. I moved out of the way - away from the hill - and jumped up. Shoving into his side, I witnessed him go tumbling down the muddy hill. I didn't feel a change in emotion, not even slightly.

My heart went back to it's regular pace as Venomsoul let out a bloodcurdling screech. Flesh-eaters changed direction and tore at his body as I sat back and watched.

Chapter 13

Squirreltail, Viperslash and Mudpaw returned shortly after, rushing to me. *They must have heard Venomsoul...*

"We heard a scream, where is Venomsoul?" Viperslash panted. They must've been running.

Think! Think! "We went to get prey and he must've been to close to the edge. He slipped down and before I could slide down to rescue him, flesh-eaters grabbed him." I lied, not making eye contact. Squirreltail narrowed her eyes at me as if she didn't believe me, but Viperslash's eyes filled with sorrow. I fought back a smirk. *Mouse-brain.*

"Oh," Was all Viperslash said. His head hung low and all I could think was, *You two were from a different Clan for StarClan's sake. You shouldn't care what happens with those fox-hearts.*

Before Mudpaw or Squirreltail could question Venomsoul's death, I stood up and pointed with my tail to the gorge. "We need to hurry down while they are still occupied with Venomsoul. Let's go while we can," I hissed and before anyone could argue, I rushed down the slippery, muddy hill.

The gorge wasn't too far from where I stood, I was nearly there by the bottom of the hill. I looked over my shoulder and watched Squirreltail, Mudpaw and Viperslash tearing through the mud.

I didn't bother waiting for them, they knew where to go. The flesh-eaters that didn't get a chance to get to Venomsoul turned from the scene. A herd of more showed up and all over again, I wished I was up high and away from the freaks. I would have done anything to curl up in my nest once more, with no worries to overrun my mind.

I glanced over my shoulder at the flesh-eaters gaining on me. They were coming from both directions by then. My legs surged with adrenaline and my heart pumped twice the speed as it was

supposed to. My breathing came short and in a split heartbeat, I tripped over one of the dead branches and tumbled onto my face.

Squirreltail, Mudpaw and Viperslash took off past me as I fought to raise to my paws again. Mudpaw was the first to start to go across the bridge, Squirreltail shoving him forward. Just as Squirreltail and Viperslash got onto it, Leopardstar called over from the other side. "No! Don't run!" She warned, but it was too late.

The bridge cracked and creaked, then snapped when both Squirreltail and Viperslash hit the middle of it. "No!" I yelled, reaching down toward Squirreltails' falling body.

The two warriors hit the water with a deafening slap and I held my breath as I waited for them to break the surface. Horrified, moments went by with no sign of them. "Squirreltail!" I yowled, using all the air in my lungs. My voice bounced off the cliff walls, but neither of them appeared at the surface.

I looked up to the other side of the gorge and noticed Mudpaw was climbing up the cliff from the edge. His hind legs scratched at the rocks, pebbles falling to the rushing waters. Leopardstar didn't seem to notice. Redfur hurried to the edge and grabbed the young toms' scruff, yanking him to safety.

"Reedstar! Watch out!" Poppyheart called. As I turned to look behind me, I noticed Leopardstar didn't seem to care. Even from the other side I could see a glint of humor in her green eyes. I stood up straight and looked over my shoulder.

My eyes widened with shock. Letting out a gasp, I backed away to the very edge of the cliff. Flesh-eaters surrounded me, moans escaping their gaping mouths. Without a choice, I leaped into the gorge.

No! I can't die! No, NO!

Chapter 14 - The Last of Reedstar

"*Blood will surround the selfish and jaws will consume the softest.*" A voice hissed in my ear. It seemed to echo in my head. I was throw into a whirl of memories, how I had that dream and how I had several night-terrors after that. It all seemed to happen so fast. I realized as I fell to the currents, it happened exactly like my dream.

Bloody, growling cats stepped off of the edge after me. They had no sense of right and wrong. The waves churned as the water tumbled down-stream and to the marsh in DarkClan and to a lake out of our territories. Rocks jutted out of the river, pointed and threatening. I let out a ear-piercing screech as the water came closer... and closer...

My legs flailed around and my eyes met with Leopardstar's. She watched me fall with her paws - one resting over the other - over the edge. The water came to me before I could take in a gulp of air. I was plunged into the fast moving water, the pressure of the water causing my ears to ring. Surrounded by waves, I fought to break the surface. The current thrashed me around so fast I didn't know what way was up.

I looked around and the water slowly faded to red. The flesh-eaters plunged into the water with me, barrel-rolling down stream quicker than me. Their jaws gaping open and eyes wide. Air bubbles escaped their open mouths.

My lungs ached and I tried to reach the surface but I couldn't get there. The water was too quick. I tumbled down twice as fast as a rabbit could bolt away from danger. My vision grew dark as moments passed with no oxygen. Instinct made me open my mouth even though I knew there was no air underwater.

I closed my mouth as I swallowed the red water. *Help! Someone help!* I screamed silently and then I caught sight of Squirreltail.

Flailing my legs around, I instead attempted to get to Squirreltail.

Her body was caught on a sharp rock, no movement coming from her whatsoever. *She must be unconscious!* "Squirreltail!" I gurgled and I realized how bad of an idea that was. I used the last of my energy to grab her and push her to the top. Squirreltails' legs kicked a bit and my heart fluttered. *Did I just help someone?* I wondered. My lungs felt like someone was clutching them, holding on for dear life.

I looked up to see Squirreltail floating to the top, moving slowly. I knew she had given up when she got stuck; she must've been letting death take her. I should've been better, and I realized that as I held onto the last bit of the air in my lungs. *Maybe you would have lasted longer if you hadn't of been so selfish.* A familiar voice advised to me. It was almost like they had spoken right into my ear even with the water surrounding my failing body.

I squeezed my eyes shut and my body automatically sucked in the tangy water. My body shut down and I was sent into an unwelcoming cold, dark place.

Beginning of the End

Leopardstar watched with no emotion as Reedstar screamed and fell to his death. The deafening sound of his body hitting the water echoed up to the survivors. Mudpaw didn't seem to care much that Reedstar was gone, either. Well, no one seemed to care. Flesh-eaters plunged in after Reedstar, Squirreltail and Viperslash's vanished bodies.

"Do you think that they'll turn into a flesh-eater?" Lighteningice whispered, her tail trembling around her kits. They hid in her chest, whimpering.

Leopardstar didn't take her green eyes off of the churning waters. Her eyes glaring into the gorge. "Unless he was bitten, no," She mumbled. No one replied to her response, they all kept quiet.

Mudpaw backed away from the edge and turned toward downstream. It was peaceful now, they all realized. Reedstar wasn't ordering anyone around, the flesh-eaters had all fallen to their doom, and the wind wasn't howling. No rain came down then, the clouds had been pushed away, revealing the sun.

"Do you think we'll be safe over here?" Heatherleg murmured, scooting Sunkit closer to her with her tail. "We might not be. Flesh-eaters won't drown. Maybe with time they will, but by the time they reach the end of the river they'll still be alive." Lilypatch responded and Heatherleg gulped loudly. Stormkit and Sootkit shrunk down in fear as the tension grew.

"So, Mudpaw," Leopardstar growled, lifting her head slightly. Mudpaw's head shot toward her and he side-stepped to get away from the muscular she-cat. "What happened to Snowpaw and Venomsoul?"

Mudpaw blinked and he took a moment to reply. He looked choked up with grief. "Reedstar pushed Snowpaw to the flesh-eaters so Squirreltail, Reedstar, and I could get away," Mudpaw whispered,

head down and paws shuffling. "What about Venomsoul? Where did you even find those two?" Leopardstar hissed, turning toward the brown apprentice.

"Squirreltail took us to Twolegplace when we got overrun by flesh-eaters. They were on top of a Twoleg nest. When we woke up the next morning, no flesh-eaters were left in Twolegplace. Turns out the mudslide had taken them down -" Mudpaw explained but Leopardstar interrupted, "The mudslide made a loud noise when a tree fell and it brought them to here. Continue,"

Mudpaw dipped his head and stood up straight. "And then we ran to the mudslide and Reedstar ordered us to get prey. Squirreltail and I had told the two about him killing Snowpaw while Reedstar slept. Venomsoul stayed back with Reedstar. He was suppose to kill Reedstar but Reedstar must've gotten to him before he could push him down to the flesh-eaters." He stopped, looking around at the shocked cats.

"I knew Reedstar would be selfish like that." Poppyheart muttered, her head lowered with shame. Boldfang shook his head.

"Why did you ask, Leopardstar?" Mudpaw meowed, taking a step toward the spotted leader. She turned around and gave him a look, "Only wondering."

There was something in her green eyes that made the cats cringe. Something menacing and evil. She was keeping something to herself, the group could tell. "Why are you giving him that look?" Redfur growled. His fur was spiked up along his spine. Leopardstar didn't reply, only unsheathed her claws.

"Leopardstar!" Lilypatch exclaimed as Mudpaw backed away. Something about the way her eyes glinted in the bright light, the way her jaw twitched... it made their fur stand on end.

Something was up about Leopardstar, but her eyes held her secret.

Chapter 15 - Mudpaw's P.O.V.

Who's back? P_A83! And I'm back with more ideas on how to keep this story going!

August 29th, 2017: *I'm currently still editing this book along with the Hunger Games. I feel better knowing I've rewritten some parts along with fixing my mistakes!*

I backed away cautiously as Leopardstar stumbled toward me. Her eyes twitched and they visibly drained of their original color. She had no visible bite marks but I could tell she was infected. "She's infected!" I yowled and everyone broke into a panic.

Leopardstar twitched and growled, stepping forward more. "Run!" I yowled and everyone pelted away. Leopardstar was still in contact of her own body but the infection was spreading quickly. She bounded toward us without hesitation. "What do we do?" I gasped, grabbing Sootkit who was trying to catch up with the run-away group.

Sootkit squealed and Lilypatch looked over her shoulder, giving everyone a worried look. "Someone has to push Leopardstar down into the gorge! It's the only way, we can't outrun her!" Lilypatch yowled. I knew I couldn't, I had Sootkit in my jaws. I didn't want to be selfish, but I couldn't just shove her off the gorge. *I'm not nearly strong enough to shove a tall, muscular leader off of a gorge! For StarClan's sake, I'd be taken down with her!*

Boldfang and Blackpaw departed from the group while Lilypatch waved her tail to signal us to stop. The two cats ran at Leopardstar and called her to the edge of the gorge. Blackpaw stepped back until his hind paws were just on the edge, almost off of it.

Leopardstar stumbled toward the edge of the gorge and just as she neared the edge and the two cats, they skidded to the side and both

shoved her off. I swallowed as I saw her paws gripping the edge. *She still has some contact to reality...* I realized, handing over Sootkit to Poppyheart and rushing over. Redfur sat beside her with Ebonykit at his paws.

"Help, I'm falling!" Leopardstar gasped, her eyes back to normal. "Why aren't you helping me? Help me you cowards!" Boldfang held Blackpaw back and the rest of the group rushed over.

Boldfang shook his head and whispered, "I'm sorry..." Heatherleg looked away and covered Sunkit's eyes with her tail. The black warrior, once Leopardstar's wisest warrior, unhooked the old DarkClan leaders' right paw from the edge. She growled and let go by herself, her eyes clouded again. Leopardstar was completely a flesh-eater by then.

"We have to leave this place." Lilypatch announced and we all exchanged glances. "Why?" Blackpaw murmured, tipping his head to the side. "Yeah, why? It would put us in more danger!" Heatherleg hissed.

"Look around. This side is a graveyard! No prey in sight, no herbs for sickness, and barely any trees or bracken or *anything* to make nests when leaf-bare comes!" Lilypatch explained, flicking her tail to the field. It was as empty as she had said. The only possible prey to ever come around were birds.

No one answered Lilypatch so she continued, "We're going to die out here." Lighteningice and Heatherleg exchanged worried glances and I sighed.

"We might as well go. What else do we do?" I muttered and Blackpaw nodded, agreeing.

Boldfang dipped his head. "We should go. Now, before anything else happens." Lilypatch dipped her head and we set off.

Silence surrounded the group as we grieved for the deaths of Squirreltail, Viperslash, and Leopardstar. I could sense no one was going to grieve for Reedstar. Sunkit mewled, crying out to Heatherleg as she dangled from her mouth, "Heatherleg... I'm

hungry!" She wailed and Sootkit and Stormkit cried out as well.

"Can we have milk now? I'm hungry!" Sootkit wailed loudly. Stormkit wailed too and soon, all three were wailing for anything they could eat. Flesh-eaters on the other side of the gorge came to the edge and didn't think twice before stepping off the cliff. Not a scream came from their hungry jaws as they plunged into the river.

"Sunkit, Sootkit, Stormkit!" Lilypatch hissed, whipping around. The three kits were still crying out. *Maybe because no one cared to answer them.* "Be quiet. You'll have your food when we do. Enough!" The three kits sniffled and complained but didn't call out anymore.

We went down hill more, the wet grass making it hard to walk without slipping. "Halt!" Lilypatch yowled and we stopped at the bottom of the short hill. Where that ended it was flat, but another mudslide had happened and it was majorly steep. "We can't go down that without causing an injury," Boldfang mumbled.

"Is there another way, do you know?" I mewed, stepping forward.

Lilypatch looked to the right and I did too. The mudslide went on, even out of our eyesight. The whole hill seemed to of collapsed.

I couldn't see how we'd be able to get back to the other side without having to go around the lake in the first place anyway. Lilypatch and Cloudjaw kept their heads together and Poppyheart and Redfur joined in.

We waited for what seemed like seasons and finally, the four came to a conclusion. "The only way we can actually get across is to go into the gorge and swim to the other side." Cloudjaw mewed and Lilypatch gave a small nod. My jaw dropped. None of us could swim and we had four kits on top of that!

"Are you *trying* to kill us?" Heatherleg gasped, scooting Sunkit's puny body toward her stomach more. "Any other ideas? Someone is going to twist their ankles sliding down that mudslide. Rocks and sticks are all through it and we can't risk it. It's too steep." Poppyheart answered calmly.

"And you're willing to risk drowning, is what you're saying?" Blackpaw chimed in and I nodded, narrowing my eyes. "None of us can swim and we have four kits. We're better off jumping off the cliff and onto ground, we'd die both ways!" I complained. My tail lashed to and fro.

The two former deputies exchanged glanced. "Both ways could mean death, but we-" Cloudjaw started but Redfur raised his tail to silence him. "We should send someone down the hill with the kits and they can go to the lake and swim across. The rest of us should jump into the gorge," Redfur suggested and Lilypatch dipped her head after a heartbeat.

"Yeah, alright. Lets just go kill ourselves. Yeah, good plan." I snarled, looking away. Blackpaw nodded, agreeing with me. "No thanks, I think I'd rather go with the kits because you three are as crazy as Reedstar and the flesh-eaters combined!"

"No. I want to see who can survive these things. Like, who's the toughest. Lighteningice, Heatherleg, Poppyheart, and Redfur go down the hill and across the lake with the kits. The rest of us, this is a test. We are going to either swim or drown." Lilypatch ordered.

Is there not a sane cat around anymore? I thought as I watched the eight cats go down the hill slowly. Rain started to come down lightly, but as I neared the edge, it began pelting down. Sighing, I crept closer until my heart lurched.

Here goes nothing...

Chapter 16 - Cloudjaw's P.O.V.

I watched out of the corner of my eye as Mudpaw stood at the edge of the gorge. Blackpaw, Boldfang, and Lilypatch also took their places. I noticed that no flesh-eaters were on the other side stumbling around, just the blood stained grounds where others were killed.

Lowering myself at the cliffs edge, I murmured, "So," My voice echoed along the rocks walls. Rain pelted down harshly and I fluffed out my white fur. A pang in my heart made me cringe. Any mention of 'white' made me remember that Whitetooth was gone; it was like an open wound, still fresh.

I swallowed my grief and muttered, "Who's going first?" I glanced over at Lilypatch and seen her gulp. She blinked but before she could respond. Boldfang fluffed out his long fur and stood up straight. "I will." He decided and I dipped my head.

"Very well, jump then." I insisted. Boldfang took in several deep breaths, shuffling his paws. As the tom bunched up his muscles, Lilypatch put her paw in front of his chest. "Wait, we should all jump at the same time. Look for rocks before you go, though," Lilypatch mewed and I took in a deep breath. My heart started beating fast at the thought of plunging into the dark water.

Leaning over the edge, I quickly checked for any rocks that could be jutting out. Inwardly, I hoped that at least one would be threaten us, so we would have an excuse to go down the muddy hill instead. All was clear, at the surface anyway.

"Go!" Lilypatch yelled and without thinking, we all jumped.

As I fell, my legs flailed in the air, as if my instincts expected to climb back up. My mouth was open wide but no scream escaped. As for the others, Lilypatch and Mudpaws' screams bounced off the cliff walls.

As I neared the water, I took in as much air as my lungs would hold. The sky escaped from around me as I was consumed by the rivers fast currents. My vision was a blur and I had to blink several times to keep the water from stinging my eyes anymore than they already were.

The current thrashed me around, throwing me in circles through the cold water. My lungs were already aching and I was desperate to get to the surface. I kicked as hard as I could, but without any sense of up or down, it was hopeless. A sudden pain shot through me as my hind paw hit a rock. Quickly I spotted the slimy boulder and grasped it, hooking onto it as best as I could. Pushing myself up, I broke the surface and gasped for air.

"Lilypatch! Mudpaw! Boldfang! Blackpaw!" I spluttered, but I was the only one with my head above the water. I looked downstream to see the current coming on stronger and harder. A boulder stuck out just far enough to give me a warning, but I couldn't get away from it in time. Holding my breath, I was forced under the rivers' current, rolling downstream. The air in my lungs was knocked out of me as I slammed into another rock.

I watched the bubbles float to the surface as my vision grew dark. I caught a glimpse of a figure in the water; if it was a flesh-eater or one of us, I had no idea. I suddenly could see the sun shining through the water and my first though was, *Oh no... StarClan is here to get me!* As I was forced down the river with my lungs screaming for air, I was suddenly jerked upward. I quickly realized that the sun was brighter because I was out of the gorge and more toward the lake.

Having broke the surface, I gasped loudly and let out wet coughs. I was drug onto the shore of the river, hacking up water. I staggered to the side and looked to the left to see who my saver was.

"Squirreltail?" I whispered but she didn't look toward me. Her frame was scrawny and her eyes hollow while they searched the water as it churned and swirled. The only thing I knew that hadn't changed was her bushy red, squirrel-like tail.

Squirreltail kept watching the water and I stepped forward.

"You're... Alive?" I croaked. I cleared my throat as water crept up again. I coughed until I felt better, spatting out the water. Peeking at the sky, I noticed the clouds were thinning and I figured the rest of the day would be warm and filled with sun.

She didn't answer me at all, so I watched the water as well. "Where's Reedstar and Viperslash?" I asked after a few more awkward moments of silence. My tail whipped from side to side in impatience. Squirreltail faced me for a brief heartbeat and then faced the water again.

"I didn't see them when I got out of the river. Reedstar pushed me to the surface just when I was giving up." Squirreltail explained. I nodded, watching the water again. She continued, "I saw you five jump. I was here, waiting, I guess."

I guess Reedstar isn't totally heartless after all... I thought. Just then, a head popped up. It was Mudpaw. "Grab him! Grab him!" I insisted, craning my head out over the water to grab him if Squirreltail didn't. But Squirreltail swiftly grasped the apprentice by the scruff and backed up to bring him up to the shore. Mudpaw didn't move much as she laid him down.

I padded over to him and prodded the small brown apprentice. His eyes burst open again and gasped for air. A splashing sound made me turn, Mudpaw's coughs in the background.

Squirreltail lifted Lilypatch from the river, her soaked body dripping as she dragged herself from the water. Lilypatch, too, let out desperate coughs until water came out. "There's still Blackpaw and Boldfang." I hissed, my throat stinging and my head pounding.

Within heartbeats, Blackpaw popped up on the other side of the river, gasping for air and legs slapping at the water. Squirreltail jumped in and grabbed his scruff, dragging him to the other side of the river. Squirreltail easily grabbed onto the shore just under me. I moved aside as she dropped Blackpaw's body safely onto the ground.

Blackpaw wheezed but didn't let out any coughs. He didn't move, as if in shock. "Squirreltail?" Lilypatch murmured, gazing over at the

fluffy she-cat. The LightClan deputy sat up and shook out her grey fur, water droplets showering us like mist.

We waited for Boldfang's head to pop up too, but as moments went by, he didn't. My heart throbbed, *What if he doesn't make it? I knew this was a bad idea...* Meanwhile, I noticed Poppyheart was climbing onto the shore with Sootkit. "I hit something on my way over!" She called to us and I exchanged a glance with Lilypatch.

"Like... a body? We're still missing Boldfang." I meowed, narrowing my eyes. Mudpaw padded up to stand beside me, swallowing nervously. "Yes, it was soft and didn't grab me, so I'm assuming he was... gone," Poppyheart mewed, padding closer. Redfur pulled himself up with Ebonykit safely in his mouth.

The tortoiseshell medicine cat took a second glance at the red warrior. "Squirreltail, is that you?" Poppyheart mewed, her head tilted to the side. After she set Sootkit down, the small fluffy kit shook out his pelt.Squirreltail still didn't reply.

As Lighteningice crossed with Stormkit, she let out a gasp and set the small tom down. She hurried up to Squirreltail, Sootkit and Stormkit following on her heels. "You're alive? How good to see you!" Her white fur sparkled and clung to her skinny frame. Squirreltail's ear flicked. "I didn't think it would be too much of a shock," Squirreltail mewed and then muttered, "But I guess I was wrong."

The white queen sat beside Squirreltail and groomed her kits. I assumed it was more for their warmth than their looks.

Poppyheart let out a whimper from behind us. Everyone turned to face her as she bent over Blackpaws motionless body. He lay like a stone on the grassy shore. Squeezing my eyes shut, I prayed to StarClan. *Please don't let any one else die... Poppyheart and I are the only ones left of SpiritClan now.*

A growl rumbled deep in my chest as the rage of losing another cat weighed on me. Kneading my claws into the ground, I fought to stay sensible. "After we bury Blackpaw, we need to find shelter before dark. Should we make some of those sticks we made to help

kill the infected?" I asked Lilypatch. She shrugged, her sorrowful gaze following the current, "I don't know. We should, but where are we even going to find branches?" Looking away from her, I sighed.

"Running might not be the best answer, since half of us are weak from almost drowning and not eating. We might have to make weapons and find our shelter as we travel," I pointed out.

Redfur shook his head. "Most of the flesh-eaters fell and are being taken into the lake. I think it would be a waste of time." The medicine cat insisted. I dipped my head to the tom. "Right. So, lets get going. We should hunt tonight, too."

Lilypatch, Poppyheart, and I started digging out the hole for the brown tom. No one spoke as we lowered him into the grave. Poppyheart and I said our final farewells to him, and then together we covered him with dirt.

As we started to leave the shore, Squirreltail padded up to me. "We need to find a place made by Twolegs. Their nests are a lot more stronger than ours."

Chapter 17 - Poppyheart's P.O.V.

I padded beside Redfur in the rear, making sure Heatherleg, Lighteningice, and their kits didn't fall behind. "We should make sure we find herbs, too." I mewed to Redfur. The tom nodded without looking over at me and responded lightly, "Of course." Redfur then called up to the three in the front of the group, "Cloudjaw, Poppyheart and I need to collect supplies before we go to the Twolegplace!"

Cloudjaw called back over his shoulder, "Alright. Lilypatch, you should go with them. I'll keep Mudpaw with the queens somewhere up high so we can hunt as well,"

I suddenly felt energetic, realizing we were finally making up for all the bad things that were happening.

We trotted along, toward a place we didn't even know existed. "Are we even sure the Twoleg nest is secure enough? What if there are Twoleg flesh-eaters?" I fretted, my eyes narrowed. Cloudjaw, Lilypatch and Squirreltail didn't reply right away.

"All we know is that their nests are better than what we've had. We'll have to just go along with it and raid their stuff for food when we run out of prey." Cloudjaw replied. I nodded, even though I knew no one would see it.

We began trekking up a semi-steep hill when we realized we had found ourselves just outside of LightClan and in Twolegplace. A small mudslide had pulled down the fence, making it wide open.

Cloudjaw halted and turned to face us. He flicked his tail toward a large box up beside a Twoleg nest. Mudpaw left with Lighteningice, her kits scrambling at her paws to be in front. He had Ebonykit in his jaws. Heatherleg padded in behind, Sunkit dangling from her

mouth as well. Her body was small and shaky.

Thyme for her anxiety... If I can't find that, I'll get juniper berries, they will help a bit. Burnet maybe? No, charomile is in Twoleg gardens... Perfect! That will soothe everyones' minds and keep everyones' strength up. I'll need to get plenty of that. Catmint is also a necessity. Poppyseeds will be needed for sleep, I'm sure of that... Sorrel if anyone needs an appetite... And I'll need borage leaves for Lighteningice... I thought things through, narrowing my eyes at the Twoleg nests.

Cloudjaw turned to me, his gaze serious. "Poppyheart, Redfur, Lilypatch will go with you," Lilypatch nodded to us and stood up to leave. "Heatherleg, you're coming with Squirreltail and I to catch fresh-kill. Mudpaw, I'll leave you in charge of the kits. Lighteningice will be here, too." Cloudjaw instructed and I nodded, padding off with Lilypatch and Redfur.

"I'm going to grab charomile. It's always in Twoleg gardens. Would thyme be around, even in this weather?" I mewed and turned to Redfur. Redfur narrowed his eyes in thought. "It might be. I'm not to sure though, with all this rain."

I nodded and faced forward again. "Do you think we'll be able to survive this?" Lilypatch murmured, avoiding eye contact. I blinked, unsure how I should reply. Redfur cleared his throat and replied, "I can't promise you anything, but if we stay strong and stay together, we might just be able to pull through and make a new generation of cats."

I nodded and Lilypatch met eyes with Redfur, searching them. Redfur looked away. "You don't really think that, do you?" She mewed and I sighed, "I think something is going to happen, but its never okay to give up hope. You just have to hold on. Never give up,"

Redfur looked over at me and Lilypatch did, too. "Now, can we look for herbs? We don't have that much time." I mewed after a few long - excruciatingly long - heartbeats.

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We padded away from the outside of the Twolegplace. We had managed to grab thyme, goldenrod, poppyseeds that were held in an ivy leaf, plenty of charomile, enough catmint to treat a few cats, and borage leaves. We had left the Twolegplace completely through a hole in the fence. As much as I worried we'd get killed by thousands of flesh-eaters, it seemed they had all fallen into the gorge. We only had spotted maybe ten flesh-eaters, no huge herds.

I squeezed through the hole in the wooden fence, Redfur right after me and then Lilypatch. "I think StarClan has a plan for us, maybe that's why we are still alive?" The suggestion came out of no where, but I felt like it needed to be said. Redfur and Lilypatch shrugged, their mouths too full to respond.

"Hey! You three, help!" A voice called from beside us, in Twolegplace. My heart lurched and I scanned the Twoleg nests. "Up here! In the house!" It called. *House? What?* I wondered and then I caught sight of a blue-gray cat with bright yellow eyes.

"Up there," I mewed, putting my herbs down. "Stay here, I'll get her." I ordered, turning to them and then running up to the transparent box above. The transparent square was thin and in two halves, one half was overlapping the other. The blue-gray she-cat scrapped at a dark, mesh screen. The screen was torn up in several slices where she had desperately tried to escape.

I hopped up to the small ledge to find the she-cat was panicking. "I can't get this off, and there are humans below me! They're trying to get to me, I've been waiting here for two days! Please help," She pleaded, clawing at the mesh-screen.

Through the transparent square, I wearily looked her over. "Are you bitten?" I meowed, narrowing my eyes.

The blue she-cat looked offended. "Of course not! I ran up here when I heard a live human come in. They attracted those... *things*!" She hissed and I was taken aback. "What language are you speaking?" I mewed as sniffed the transparent square.

The she-cat tilted her head to the side. "Uh, cat language?" She growled, looking me up and down. "We say Twolegs and

Twolegplace and Twoleg nests, what's a human and a house?"

The transparent square was lined with white wood, and the bottom square was open just enough for me to fit my paws under. Together, we slid the square open just enough for her to squeeze through. I let it drop with a slam. We jumped down to the hard, Thunderpath-like ground. "Well, humans - I'm guessing - means Twolegs to you. A house is the den where they live in. I guess to outsiders, I speak like a human. It rubbed off on me when I lived with my housefolk." The she-cat explained, licking her paw and drawing it over an ear.

Before I could say anything, she kept talking. "I'm Eclipse," The blue-gray she-cat greeted, dipping her head, "And you are...?" I nodded to her, "I am Poppyheart, this is Lilypatch-" I flicked my tail to the old LightClan deputy and then to the dark orange medicine cat, "and this is Redfur. Redfur and I used to be medicine cats, before the outbreak happened." The two cats padded over with the bundles of herbs.

Eclipse nodded, sitting down. "Is it just you three?" She mewed, glancing at the three of us. I shook my head. "We used to have Blackpaw, Boldfang, Viperslash, Venomsoul, Snowpaw, Otterkit, Ebonykit, Birdfeather-" I listed off as many names as I could. "Whitetooth, Leopardstar. Oh and that selfish Reedstar. They were the ones who survived with us, but didn't make it. There were many, many more that in our Clans - may they rest in peace - before the infection." I explained and Eclipse nodded, narrowing her eyes in thought.

"It's heart-wrenching to lose kits. I mean, I haven't had any before, but I get it. My sister had three. I don't know what happened to them, though." Eclipse murmured and Redfur stepped up, "We still have four. Sunkit - who is always carried and cared for by Heatherleg. Lighteningice has Sootkit and Stormkit. Birdfeather had two kits, Ebonykit and Otterkit. Ebonykit survived, while the other two did not," Eclipse's eyes went dark and kept listening. "Cloudjaw and Lilypatch are our leaders right now, since Reedstar and Leopardstar are gone. If you stay with us, you will meet the others." Redfur explained.

"Reedstar was selfish. All he wanted was leadership and power."

Lilypatch growled, "But why are we telling her about our group? We can't just let a stranger in!" Lilypatch exclaimed. I noticed the two had put down their bundles of herbs. I shrugged and Redfur did too.

Redfur snorted. "Who would she tell? She's been cooped up in a Twoleg nest for a few sunrises, she said. And where would she go? We can't just leave her," He insisted and Lilypatch narrowed her eyes at the blue-gray cat. Her bright yellow eyes glowed, seemingly clueless. I looked over at Redfur and he met eyes with me.

Eclipse seemed to be in a trance, day dreaming. I prodded her chest and Eclipse shook her head. "Sorry. Lets go!" She squeaked and stood up to pad away. Lilypatch grabbed her herbs and so did Redfur and I.

Redfur rolled his eyes. Lilypatch took the lead and soon Eclipse padded in sync beside her. The old LightClan deputy took a step to the opposite side, looking annoyed. The blue-gray she-cat didn't seem to notice, or if she did, she didn't let it phase her.

Padding away, we headed toward the boxes where Mudpaw and Lighteningice were waiting.

Chapter 18 - Mudpaw's P.O.V.

I must've fallen asleep with Lighteningice and the four kits, because I suddenly woke up to moaning and a darkened sky. My heart lurched at the sight of flesh-eaters roaming below. At least four were clawing at the boxes. Luckily, we were high enough to avoid any confrontation.

"Lighteningice!" I hissed, prodding her sparkling fur. "Wake up!" I growled, shaking her awake. "Wha..." She mumbled, her eyes half open. Sootkit, Stormkit, Ebonykit, and Sunkit stirred but didn't wake. "Sh!" I hissed, pointing to the infected with my tail-tip. Her eyes widened and I covered her mouth. "Sh, I said!" I growled and her eyes darted from the flesh-eaters to me and back and forth.

I saw Cloudjaw, Squirreltail, and Heatherleg in the distance. I didn't want to attract more flesh-eaters, so I stood on my hind legs and waved with a paw to try to signal them. Unsure if they had got the message, I let out a hiss, "Watch out!" The trio picked up the pace. The four kits started squealing and I looked down to see them cowering into the queens fur. Lighteningice covered their heads with her fluffy tail and licked each one in an attempt to calm them down.

Cloudjaw departed from the two she-cats and padded to the left, away from where we were. "Where's Heatherleg?" Sunkit wailed and I felt a pang in my heart. "Shh, she's on her way." Lighteningice whispered, gazing down at the four with a hopeful gaze.

"What do we do now?" I growled and just like that, Cloudjaw was out in front of the fence, making noise. "What a mouse-brain," Lighteningice growled, her ears twitching. The dark, groaning figures turned around and staggered toward the noise.

"Come get me, bags of meat!" Cloudjaw yowled. The flesh-eaters slowly made their way toward the white tom.

I shook my head and murmured, "I hope that mouse-brain has a

mouse or something so they don't just go after *him*."

"He's going to get himself killed!" Lighteningice exclaimed. Glancing over, I caught a glimpse of her trembling. "Or half killed," I mumbled mostly to myself.

The four flesh-eaters that had sensed us were gone by then, stumbling toward something that smelled like cut open prey. A bitter scent came from it, too. "Deathberries?" I murmured, tipping my head to the side.

"Great idea. Lets hope they didn't get any of it on the other prey!" Lighteningice mewed, her eyes as wide as an owls. Squirreltail and Heatherleg dashed to the wall and made their way to the roof with us.

The tall, light brown she-cat was looking at Squirreltail as if they were already having a conversation. "I highly doubt that will kill them, but we need to move anyway. Maybe to the roof? If we're quick and quiet enough, they won't even bother coming back," Heatherleg murmured though the crow she held.

The sound of paws coming from the other way made us all turn. We waited, our muscles tensed up and fur bristling. I let go of my breath as I saw Poppyheart, Redfur, and Lilypatch climb up. Cloudjaw followed. A mystery cat was with them, a pretty blue-gray she-cat with glowing yellow eyes.

"Who's that?" Cloudjaw muttered in Lilypatch's ear. "This is Eclipse," Lilypatch announced a bit too loud. Cloudjaw whipped his tail onto her mouth, "Quiet! If you hadn't of noticed, I just chased off some flesh-eaters. They aren't too far from here so keep it down!" He warned. Lilypatch nodded and flicked her tail to the new-comer.

"Poppyheart saved her from Twoleg flesh-eaters. She might as well stay with us," Lilypatch mewed and Cloudjaw's ear twitched. I narrowed my eyes at Eclipse but didn't say anything.

"We can introduce the group to you when the sun rises. As of right now, we each need to eat." Poppyheart explained and the two former deputies agreed.

Sunkit hopped up and down and scurried under Heatherlegs' paws. I grabbed Sunkit since Heatherleg couldn't and waited for Cloudjaw to grab his starling and pigeon. As a group, we padded carefully over the slick Twoleg roof to the other side.

The three warriors with prey dropped their kills into a pile. Heatherleg dropped her crow onto Cloudjaws' starling and pigeon. Squirreltail dropped a robin and a shrew.

"Who eats what?" I murmured when everyone was settled. "Only to be fair, I will only eat what I catch." Eclipse mewed and I narrowed my eyes at her. My fur spiked up. Though the she-cat seemed friendly, I felt hostile with her around. As if she would pounce onto the pile of prey and throw it off the roof and then try to kill us.

"Good idea," Cloudjaw responded.

"Lighteningice, since you're feeding two kits plus Sunkit and now Ebonykit, you get to have your first pick." Lilypatch mewed and Lighteningice nodded, stepping forward and picking up the robin. "I got you borage leaves to, to help produce more milk." Poppyheart meowed, sliding a couple leaves toward the she-cat.

She looked up at the medicine cat and then gazed at the leaves with disgust. "Thank you..." She sighed, and then chewed them up and swallowed. Quickly after she swallowed, Lighteningice dug into the robin. I envied her as she chowed down. I had a feeling I wouldn't be eating much tonight.

"Poppyheart, Redfur, you'll have to share one. Lilypatch and I will share and Mudpaw and Squirreltail will have to share. Eclipse, if there are remainders, it will be yours." Cloudjaw explained. Poppyheart grabbed the shrew, Cloudjaw grabbed the crow and Squirreltail grabbed the pigeon. Eclipse took the starling for herself.

"Here is some charomile. Eat it before the prey, just because." Poppyheart mewed and she passed along a white and yellow small flower to each of us. I lapped it up from the cold, bumpy Twoleg roof. It didn't have too much of a taste, so it went down easily.

"What does it do?" Eclipse mewed, lapping the flower and

swallowing. Meanwhile, everyone was tearing open their prey and eating it within heartbeats. "It makes your veins explode and your blood boil so hot it burns your muscle and skin to mush. Your fur with catch on fire and your eyes will melt from your sockets!" Redfur taunted, widening his eyes and lashing his tail.

Eclipse jumped up, breathing quickly and her yellow eyes grew round. "What?!" She gasped, backing away. Redfur and Poppyheart started to purr and everyone else did too. "I'm only kidding, don't get your whiskers in a knot," Redfur purred through a mouthful. "It keeps your strength up and soothes your mind." Poppyheart stated and Eclipse visibly relaxed.

"Good..." Eclipse breathed, taking a big bite of her starling. I had already finished my share of pigeon. Licking my lips and fluffing out my brown fur, I curled up and closed my eyes.

As uncomfortable and cold as I was, I managed to fall asleep in mere heartbeats, letting my body relax and my mind clear. Vivid dreams flooded my vision, nightmares of flesh-eaters and Snowpaw's screams.

Cats in their Group

[image]

Cats in the Group~

They have no official leader, but they have the two who are closest to it.

Leaders~
Lilypatch - Grey with white tail tip, chest and muzzle, blue eyes, she-cat.
Cloudjaw - Fluffly white pelt, amber eyes, tom.

Medicine Cats~
Poppyheart - Tortoiseshell, white muzzle and chest, blue eyes, she-cat.
Redfur - Dark orange with white paws and tail tip, light amber eyes, tom.

Fighters~ *[They all are fighters, but the ones who only have their job is protecting and fighting are...]*
Squirreltail - Dark orange with white paws and extremely fluffy tail, Redfur's sister, amber eyes, she-cat.
Heatherleg - Tall light brown, green eyes, she-cat.
Mudpaw - Dark brown with dark blue eyes, tom.

Eclipse - Blue-gray with bright yellow eyes, she-cat.

Queens~
Lighteningice - White with yellow eyes, she-cat - Stormkit; grey with white paws, yellow eyes, tom. Sootkit; light grey with white ears and stomach, green eyes, tom.
Ebonykit; black kit with yellow eyes.
Sunkit - golden, white paws with amber eyes, she-kit. *[She has no official mother, but Heatherleg is close to it]*

Chapter 19 - Squirreltail's P.O.V.

Eclipse kept me up most of the night with her non-stop snoring. *Once a kittypet, always a kittypet.* I had thought, glaring toward her. After what seemed to be only moments of sleep, I woke up with the sun blazing down from the blue, cloudless sky. It was great. No rain, no breeze, just warm weather. The only thing that bugged me was that the Twoleg roof was sizzling hot. I couldn't keep my paws on the shiny topping for more than a heartbeat or my pads would surely burn off.

I realized I was the only one awake; Cloudjaw and Lilypatch were curled up near Lighteningice, who was also curled up in a ball with the three kits snoring softly. Heatherleg lay beside the white queen with Sunkit at her belly. Mudpaw was alone on the other side of the roof, while Eclipse lay - still snoring - in between the group. Redfur and Poppyheart lay a few tail-lengths away with their herbs in between them. I wondered if the heat would dry them out.

The sun was blazing like a ball of fire in the sky, scorching everything its rays touched. For once in a long time, I was dying for a drink. My mouth was dry and I needed water. No puddles were on the roof, just on the hard, rocky, crow-food infested ground. Any water source from below was bound to be infected or tampered with by Twolegs before the outbreak.

I hopped down onto the ground, forgetting to check if the coast was clear. I pricked my ears and scanned the grounds. No flesh-eaters. I spotted a puddle and padded toward it. A rainbow swirled in it. Smelling it briefly, my head shot back in disgust. *Gross!* It smelt of a Twoleg monsters.

I wasn't afraid to get my paws dirty, but I could tell it was poisoned. I stalked away, scanning from left to right in search of movement. My tongue was practically a lump of stone. I hadn't had anything to drink since we left the river! *I should get some moss so everyone else*

can have some as well. I decided, smiling inwardly.

Standing up straight, I trotted toward the wooden fence. I squeezed through a gap in the fence and padded out. A flesh-eater was off in the distance, stumbling about. The suns' rays shone down brightly on the grass ahead. LightClan territory was the best, and I missed running in the long heather, chasing rabbits and feeling the breeze blow through my pelt.

Twoleg flesh-eaters were moaning behind me, in the Twoleg nest. *Did they smell me?* I wondered, peeking under the hole in the fence again. Poppyhearts' scent lingered in it and a tuft of Lilypatchs' fur was stuck on the jagged edge. There was no Twoleg flesh-eaters nor anything lurking around in the Twolegplace.

I backed back out and turned around. The coast was still clear. I padded away, determined to get moss. "I might as well catch some prey while I'm out." I muttered to myself, feeling pride for my idea. It was dangerous for sure, but it would be worth it. I could outrun those bags of meat anyway!

Stalking through the long grass, my pelt burned as the sun hit me with its' hot rays. The grass may have been long, but it wasn't the best at shading anyone. I kept trekking through the grass, heading toward SpiritClan's old territory. Once I crossed into the forest, I was greeted by shade and more comfort. As much as I loved the wind in my fur and the wide open space, I also loved the shade the forest provided. Then there was DarkClan with their marsh. It was mucky and it stank, but it was water. And water was cold.

I found moss easily in the forest, though my pads weren't too used to the prickly grounds. I kept stepping on pine cones, pine needles and dead, spiky leaves. *On second thought, I think I'll stick with the moor. It has less... spiky stuff to deal with.*

I headed through the moor again, keeping low and silent. Avoiding the one flesh-eater that was still on its own and in the very center of the moor, I spotted a medium sized puddle just behind him, one of the few we had in our territory. I still had the bundle of moss in my jaws and I was determined to get water for everyone. *Maybe hunting is something I will have to wait for, but right now everyone is going to*

need water.

Slowing down, I took weary steps to keep myself hidden from the flesh-eaters blind gaze. It groaned to it self, as if it was talking in a different language. I loosened my grip on the moss and didn't take my eyes off the gory, torn up, rotting flesh-eater.

Its right ear was torn completely off, the left was cut up and bleeding. Dried blood around rotting flesh was almost everywhere. There was so much blood, I couldn't tell if the cat was originally white or grey. A bloody crust around the back of its neck made it obvious where the infection started. I recognized the cat as I stared. It was a DarkClan cat, a name like... Hushpaw or Thrushpaw.

It didn't matter anymore, though, since he was dead and didn't recognize his own name.

My paw sunk deep into a mucky hole and my eyes shot toward it. I had stepped into where the puddle used to be. Even with the rain, the puddle had shrunken almost half of its original size. I tried not to gasp, since the growling flesh-eater was just tail-lengths away. *Muddy or not, it'll have to do!* I let out a sigh and slowly stepped into the mud.

The brown liquid seeped into my leg fur and felt weird and nice at the same time. A moaning sound from in front of me made me stop. Two more flesh-eaters were on their way over, so close to each other their fur was almost brushing as they stumbled.

I tried to lift my first paw out, but it had sunken so deep inside that it had gotten stuck. My breathing started to speed up with anxiety, my heart racing. *What do I do? What do I do!?* I pulled frantically and finally yanked it out of the mud. It made an awkward sound but I hardly noticed. I took quick steps and drenched the moss into the water. I looked toward the two flesh-eaters.

They heard me! I almost yelped with fear. I stepped back but my hind legs were knee-deep in mud. The first flesh-eater was hurrying toward me. I held my breath and shot forward, into the knee deep puddle. Another flesh-eater was coming toward me. Four flesh-eaters groaned and staggered toward me, their tails drooping and

their heads hanging low as if the muscle couldn't support it any longer.

I swallowed and drenched the moss again. Dashing out of the water, I hopped so my paws didn't sink too far down. I had trouble getting out with the water trying to resist me and with the mud underneath me.

I let out a loud growl, coming deep from my throat, and leaped as far as I could. I just missed the grassy land with one paw. That one paw sunk farther down into the mud than any of the other times. Two of the flesh-eaters had tripped over their own sunken paws and fallen into the mud while the other two - one that had wandered over and the first one - still made their way toward me.

Frantically, I moved my paw up and down, kicking, but it only seemed to make it worse. The two were almost a tail-length away and I let out a screech as I yanked my paw free with all of my energy. I rolled about two tail-lengths away, the moss still grasped in my teeth.

I stood up but the muddy paw wouldn't hold me up. Pain surged through me and I let out another scream. The scream lasted for several heartbeats. My paw was twisted at an awkward angle, toward the left. My toes were bent. I breathed quickly and held my leg up as I limped toward the fence.

"I have... to... get back!" I whimpered as I clenched my teeth together so hard that my jaw kinked.

Chapter 20 - Lilypatch's P.O.V.

My eyes shot open, the bright sunlight blinding me. A scream rose in the air and at first I thought maybe Eclipse left and got attacked, but everyone was still sleeping peacefully, even her. Except Squirreltail.

"Cloudjaw! Squirreltail is in trouble. I have to go find her," I yelled, hopping down from the roof and straight to the ground. A small stab of pain shot through my leg as I landed, but I was fine. Just then, another scream rose up into the air, longer but still the same cat.

I dashed toward the gap in the fence and squeezed through. "Squirreltail!" I gasped. The red furred warrior was limping toward me, her mouth grasping dripping moss and her paw twisted to the left of her body.

Pelting toward her, I pushed her along and then shoved her through the gap I came through. I squeezed through next and then grabbed the nearest thing I could find. A silver grey cylinder lay on its side. I rolled it toward the gap to block anything from coming in. Squirreltail limped toward the boxes that acted as steps to the roof. There was no way the red she-cat would be able to climb up with an twisted ankle!

I hurried toward her and let her lean on me, the sound of claws scrapping wood filling the background. "Redfur, Poppyheart, Squirreltail is injured!" I called up to the roof. Squirreltail was waiting by the first box. She dropped the moss on the first step.

"I went out to get a drink, then I decided to get moss so I could get everyone water and then I got stuck in the mud and then I ripped out my foot and I guess my toes and foot was in a improper position and now my foot hurts so badly I feel like I'm going to pass out!" Squirreltail rambled. She spoke so fast that her words were just a blur.

"Did you grab the whole bundle of herbs?" Poppyheart asked Redfur as she jumped to the last step. The red tom carried the bundle in his jaws, answering the question for her. "I got enough to drink, give that to Lighteningice and the kits." Squirreltail growled. Her jaw was clenched tight and her eyes were draining from pain.

I nodded and handed it to Redfur. He jumped back up to the roof. "We're going to have to go out. Your leg will heal by its self but in the position its in and in double the time." Poppyheart stated, sighing. "Rush will do." Redfur murmured, jumping down to us in one hop and sniffing the broken bone. "Yeah, that should be all." He muttered, eyes narrowed.

"Lilypatch, you'll have to go with them. Mudpaw, Eclipse and I are leaving to hunt again." Cloudjaw called down, hopping down each step carelessly.

I dipped my head, "Of course. Then we can all get a drink and with Squirreltails' moss that she had risked her life to get, Heatherleg and Lighteningice and the kits will have plenty of water," I dipped my head to Squirreltail. She rolled her eyes as her thigh twitched. "I will stay with Squirreltail," Redfur dipped his head to us and we returned it.

"Alright, we should get going." I sighed, turning to leave. Poppyheart said a farewell to the others and padded toward the way we had first come into Twolegplace.

I hurried along, worrying that something bad was about to happen. I stepped onto the fallen wood fence, blood stains still splattered on it. It made it darker than it already was, a dark brown with a tint of red. Not one piece of Scar was left on the wood, only the stain of his shed blood.

"Do you even know where to get rush?" I muttered, keeping my gaze forward. "Well of course, we weren't taught by kits you know," Poppyheart purred. "Rush grows in infertile soils in a wide range of moisture conditions." She stated, glancing over at me. I nodded twice but didn't look over at her.

We padded in silence through the blazing sunlight. I was luckily a

short hair, or I knew I would be suffering by then. The air was humid and the sun was pleasant and radiant. The suns' rays glittered on the poisoned puddles, gleaming brilliantly. The weather acted as if it was a normal day, showing off its fiery ball of flame with its unclouded blue sky.

I squinted as I looked up to the sky. My paws suddenly were wrapped in blades of long, light green grass. Kneading at the ground, I sighed and felt my heart flutter. I longed to run freely through the fields again. "Lilypatch!" Poppyhearts' hiss came from beside me and turning my head, I realized we were heading east.

"Coming," I replied sharply.

My mind wandered from Poppyheart's mutters of herbs and techniques. I guessed it was a medicine cats way of remembering all of those leaves and poultices.

We headed toward the forest that SpiritClan had owned, padding through the open field. All I could think about was the constant reminder that it was more likely to be overrun by the infected than to just walk through the forest without a disturbance. All I wanted was to just relax and be happy like we were before the outbreak had happened.

Suddenly, shade splashed over me and covered my pelt. Sun dotted the ground through the tree tops. I felt more refreshed now, no sun blistering my back. I noticed the breeze was cooler under the trees.

"Lilypatch," Poppyheart meowed. She sounded far away, as if she were in a tunnel on the other side. I turned toward the tortoiseshell she-cat, my eyes still forward for a mere heartbeat. "Yeah?" I mewed.

The medicine cat gave me a strange look and then gestured with her tail to follow. "Focus, this is a dangerous time and if you keep day dreaming like that, you're going to run into some major problems ahead of time." She reminded me.

"The heat makes me feel relaxed and warm. When I'm this warm, I tend to get sleepy and I loose track easier." I mumbled, giving my

chest a few embarrassed licks. Poppyheart didn't reply. Her tail swung to and fro as she took each step, dragging in the dead leaves and undergrowth. A trail started to show up as her tail became heavier. Mine did too as the weather turned hotter.

"Here." Poppyheart mewed after a while, trotting toward a small patch of long narrow leaves with lavender-colored head stalks. She sounded out of breath as she spoke. "That's odd, I thought I'd see more than this. I haven't seen anymore around and there are barely any here," Poppyheart mumbled, her eyes narrowed.

Sighing, she nipped a bundle out of the ground and dropped it at my paws. "Make the best of it and grab as much as you can." She called over her shoulder, trotting off east. "Where are you going?" I meowed.

Glancing briefly over her shoulder, she responded, "I spotted dock and bindweed. Dock will help everyones' pads heal after all of the trekking. Bindweed will help keep the rush in place."

As the medicine cat hurried away, I filled my jaws with the tall, sweet-smelling plant. I turned to follow her when the all-too-familiar sound of groaning echoed from where she had headed.

East - right
West - left (in case you didn't know)

Chapter 21 - Poppyheart's P.O.V.

My eyes grew round and my fur pricked up. Moaning sounds came from beside me and I knew right away there were more than one. I grabbed the large, tangy leaves and then picked up the long stems of the arrow-shaped flowers that I had already picked. Before I could retrace my steps to get Lilypatch, she was already rushing up to me with the bundle of rush in her jaws.

"Hurry!" I mumbled, herbs clenched tight in my mouth. I gradually trotted to a run with Lilypatch pounding in front of me.

Together, Lilyheart and I took off out of SpiritClan's old territory and entered the LightClan moor. We eased into a full blown run, bolting through the long grass. I kept my eyes locked on the four flesh-eaters as they staggered toward us. Their putrid smell wafted over to us in the breeze. Wrinkling up my nose, I tried to smell hide their stank with the tangy smell of the herbs. It didn't work as well as I had hoped.

The two of us kept up our speed to the point where the four flesh-eaters looked like ants in the distance. I stumbled to a halt, setting the bindweed and dock down and gulping in as much air as I could. By then, Lilypatch couldn't run any further either and she, too, stopped running to catch her breath. The grey she-cat lowered her head and slumped her shoulders, breathing heavily.

Soon, I caught my breath and padded toward a small pond. Sun glazed the surface and reflected off of it near the edge of one side. The dirt had suspended itself to the bottom of the pond and was as clear as the sky on the top.

I lapped away at the water and let it slide down my throat. I refused to stop, even my thirst was quenched. Lilypatch dashed over, obviously determined to get a drink. She set down the three different plants in between us and submerged her whole head in the

water. Heartbeats went by and she still didn't bring her head up. Bubbles drifted delicately to the surface where it popped and was consumed by the air.

Just then, Lilypatchs head shot out of the water briskly, her ears drooping and fur clinging to her skull. Her face was completely drenched and all she did was lick his lips and then lap the water more. "Someone's thirsty," I purred.

She kept her eyes closed and continued to lap up with water. The moaning started to get closer and the sound of shuffling, too. "We have to hurry." I growled, looking around frantically. Lilypatch sucked in as much water as she could before grabbing the bundle of rush.

Grabbing the bindweed and dock leaves, the two of us peeled away. The fence wasn't too far away, but I couldn't get enough air in my lungs with the clump of herbs filling my mouth.

I refused to stop, even when my vision began to blur. I couldn't slow them down or get myself killed. *Two medicine cats are better than one, and I'm the one with the important herbs.* They'd have to pry the bloody rush from my jaws, as dangerous as that would be.

The sun was starting to head down as we neared the Twolegplace fence. Legs on fire, head spinning and lungs aching, I felt like wailing with pain. *We're so close!* Behind us, a flesh-eater let out a growl. It's heavy paw-steps vibrated the earth as it threatened to close in on the two of us.

The fence was nearly tail-lengths away when I tripped over my own foot and tumbled to the ground. My legs cramped up and with shaky breaths, I fought to stand up. Trembling, my weakened body refused to let me up on my paws. "Get... up..." Lilypatch begged, nudging me with her nose. She was panting as well, stumbling her way to the fallen fence. I even attempted to crawl, but my muscles refused.

Lilypatch gazed at me with worried blue eyes. She slowly was making her way onto the fence. "Come on... it doesn't take long for them to catch up!" The grey she-cat fretted, glancing behind me

with apprehension.

Wheezing, I sat up and grasped the herbs tighter. Glimpsing over my shoulder, the sight of the four infected cats closing in on me gave me enough motivation to heave myself to my paws. "They just don't give up, do they?" I mumbled to myself, turning around and slowly padded over the fence.

Lilypatch followed by my side. "Squirreltail thinks she might pass out," Mudpaw gasped as we neared the injured she-cat. "What took you so long?" Lighteningice mewed from the roof, scooting her kits toward her more. Cloudjaw fluffed out his pelt and hopped down to meet us. *Were we that long that the hunting patrol has already come back?*

"We almost got caught by four flesh-eaters. They haven't given up, either." I growled after setting down the rush. Squirreltail looked drowsy, meaning they had already fed her poppy seeds for pain. I scooted the two main herbs toward Squirreltail as Redfur prepared her ankle.

Chapter 22 - Cloudjaw's P.O.V.

Nightfall came and Squirreltail was still snoring softly. The two medicine cats had worked nonstop trying to get her ankle straight again, and fortunately their hard work had paid off. Her ankle was perched up on the side of her nest, wrapped with bindweed to keep the rush straight. Redfur laid in behind her only whisker-lengths away. They were siblings, but there was *no way* you could tell. The only resemblance was their attitude and fur color. They barely talked and certainly didn't show affection toward one another. Personally, Whitetooth and I had always been close. There was a sharp pang in my heart. Squeezing my eyes shut, I took a deep breath and pushed my brave brother to the back of my mind. Silently, I prayed to him. *May StarClan light your path...*

I flicked my tail as we curled up and ate the little prey we could catch. The amount of prey that was being killed by the infected was painful to the group; we were nothing more than a bag of bones. Even the mouse I was finishing wasn't enough to satisfy my empty stomach.

"Do you think we'll survive this?" Mudpaw whispered, shuffling his paws. I gazed up from the remainders of my kill. I hesitated, startled by the random question. "I can't promise anything, but we're Clan cats. We've always been strong." I replied, keeping my eyes down. I had to because no one else would answer.

Mudpaw looked up but didn't say anything more, glancing at the others. Lilypatch ducked her head down and hissed in my ear, "We're running low on prey. We have to leave soon." I gave her a look and nodded.

Suddenly the newcomer stretched and casually mumbled, "I've heard about a herd coming this way. Flesh-eater herd. A *huge* one," She laid down, eyes half closed and drool dripping from her jaws. Baffled, I growled, "What? Who would you have talked to that would know such a thing?" I narrowed my eyes at the she-cat and then took a step toward her. Her eyes went round and she sat up,

realizing what she had said.

"I don't know when, but I know there are flesh-eaters coming. Flesh-eaters of all sorts." Eclipse murmured, shrinking away. I shoved my muzzle into her face.

"And why didn't you tell us sooner?" I snapped, baring my teeth. "We could have been on our way by now, and Squirreltail might not have injured herself!"

Redfur sat up in his nest, grooming his thick pelt. In between licks, he reassured me in a low voice, "Calm down. We still have time." I kept my gaze locked with Eclipses' yellow eyes. "How do you know this?" I asked, looking the she-cat up and then down.

"Some other kittypets around Twolegplace. It was just after it happened that they mentioned a prophecy." She murmured as her eyes darted from Redfur and then to me. The medicine cat was watching her, too. "We have to leave now. This place is dead anyway," I growled and Lilypatch nodded.

However, Redfur and Poppyheart disagreed. "Squirreltail is in no shape to travel anywhere." Poppyheart argued. "Wake her up. Get Lighteningice, Heatherleg and the four kits up. We have to move before it's too late." I insisted, ignoring their argument. My tail was whipping sharply from side to side.

I watched Poppyheart sigh and pad away toward the queens and their kits. Redfur gently awoke Squirreltail and Heatherleg while I just stood back and waited. The three kits squealed and stirred, angry to be woken up.

"Which way are the flesh-eaters coming?" I turned my sharp gaze to Eclipse, my voice demanding. "Wh-what?" She mumbled, blinking up at me with confusion clouding her yellow eyes. Rolling my eyes, I repeated through clenched teeth, "Which way are the herd of flesh-eaters coming?"

Eclipse gave me a confused look, like she had no sweet clue what I was trying to ask. "Which way? Herd?" She echoed and then as she stood up, her eyes went round. "Oh! They were said to come west.

Up hill of the gorge. They could come from anywhere though..." Eclipse mewed, giving her chest fur a few embarrassed licks. She then fluffed out her fur and watched Lilypatch and I exchange worried glances.

Before I could ask Lilypatch where she thought we should go, Eclipse added, "There is a huge, bright star in the sky at night. One that twinkles the brightest. It's called The North Star. My kittypet friends said humans would follow it at night when they were lost. We can follow that. North is our best answer!" I exchanged a glance with Lilypatch and she shrugged. "I mean, it won't take us west, so..."

By then, all the cats in the group were awake, eyes drooping and murmurs in confusion rippled quietly among the makeshift camp. I dipped my head to them and announced what the problem was. "We need to leave the territories. They are no longer our home since the outbreak took over. We will be traveling north; a herd of all sorts of flesh-eaters are said to come here and I don't want to take any chances. Prey is being eaten by the flesh-eaters and we are starving. Our best chance is to travel as far away as possible, maybe to even find others."

Squirreltail narrowed her eyes, her tail tip flicking while Mudpaw looked around anxiously. "What if we just end up being eaten?" Lighteningice gasped. I looked to Lilypatch. "We won't. We're strong and brave." She insisted.

No one said anything for several heartbeats, the only sound was the light whistle of the wind as it blew by my ears. *I have to say something...* "So is it settled? Say 'I' if you agree on going." I announced and almost everyone called out "I!". Lighteningice looked regretful, but mumbled her answer nonetheless. The only one who didn't agree was Heatherleg.

"I don't want to risk Sunkit's well-being, Cloudjaw. She's already seen so much... As well as Lighteningice's kits and Ebonykit, too," Heatherleg sighed doubtfully. Lighteningice gave her a sympathetic look. "Besides, how do we know Eclipse is even telling the truth? What if this is a made up story? What if we're walking into a trap? We haven't eaten enough to win any battle against anything!"

Lilypatch looked over at me and I let her take over.

"Cloudjaw and I have to trust Eclipse. We're running low on choices, and this is one of those times we just have to say yes. This could be a chance to find more cats to group with." Lilypatch soothed. Heatherleg shook her head and sighed again, avoiding eye contact. "What if this time it isn't the right choice?" She argued quietly.

In the corner of my eye, I noticed Lilypatch gulped. *What do I say to that? She doesn't seem to have an answer either...* I looked past the light brown she-cat and looked out toward the biggest, brightest star in the dark blue sky. "Heatherleg," I began, keeping my eyes locked on the star. "Stay here if you wish. You'll die a worse death than what your paranoia suggests about us. We need to leave as soon as possible." I looked over to Heatherleg again. She was hesitating.

"Eclipse." I turned to her and her body tensed up. "Now is your chance to tell us the truth, is this a lie or a trap?" I flicked my tail. Mudpaw and Squirreltail - who were on either sides of her - stared at the blue-gray she-cat.

Eclipse shook her head lightly. "It isn't, I swear! I'd show you to the cats who told me about it, but they... would only eat you..." She closed her eyes for a moment. I blinked and dipped my head. "Then it's settled. Lets get moving." I ordered.

One by one the group hopped off the edge of the roof, everyones' heads up to keep a sharp eye on the North Star. I waited for everyone to get down before I jumped down; Squirreltail was being assisted by Redfur and Poppyheart, Mudpaw had Ebonykit, Lighteningice had Stormkit, Redfur had Sootkit, and Heatherleg had Sunkit.

The group didn't wait while Heatherleg hesitated up above. Her eyes were clouded and her tail was trembling. "Come on, Heatherleg. Don't die this way. Even if this is a trap and even if we do die, it's better to know that we tried to keep the Clans alive then just sitting back and waiting for death to creep up on us," I mewed. Giving her a sympathetic gaze, I waited patiently for her to respond.

"You're right," She mewed, "Lets go."

I dipped my head. *Thank StarClan... If I had to wait there any longer, I was going to freak out!* I rushed off the roof and waited for Heatherleg to come by my side. We both bolted to the fence and jumped over, dashing to join the group. Heatherleg stayed at the rear with Mudpaw, Sunkit dangling from her jaws.

Padding quickly, I came to join Eclipse and Lilypatch at the front. I dipped my head to them and then breathed to myself, "Alright, North Star, show us the way!"

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The gorge is south, up hill is west, down hill is east, and the way they will be going is north. They are standing with their face away from the gorge, so it is said to be west from where they are standing.

Update (September 5th, 2017): Still editing this book as well as BloodClan Hunger Games. If you read past the edits, you might be confused because originally Ebonykit was killed along with Otterkit and Birdfeather.

Chapter 23 - Lighteningice's P.O.V.

[image]

My heartbeat quickened, beating like a bird stuck in my chest. My legs were weak and my tail was fluffed up and trembling in fear. We were bound to fall into the paws of flesh-eaters, by trap or by coincidence. I could just feel it rippling through my pelt. Something bad was going to happen. But what?

I didn't want to worry Stormkit as he dangled from my jaws. Sootkit and Stormkit should be walking on their own, I had realized by then, but they were awfully thin for their age. At almost four moons old, you'd think they were to heavy to carry. That wasn't the case at all.

Sootkit for sure couldn't keep up with the group. There must be something wrong with him; he doesn't understand as much as Stormkit. You'd think it would be the opposite, since I carry Stormkit everywhere and try to get Sootkit to understand more. But Sootkit doesn't seem to catch on like he should.

Sootkit should *be able to keep up with me since I never carry him around. Why doesn't he? Could he be infected?* I quickly tightened my grasp on Stormkit's scruff at the thought of that. He squealed in shock and I muttered a small apology.

"Are you okay?" Poppyheart mewed through the herbs she brought along. I gave her a small nod and was forced to look away.

"How much longer, Lighteningice?" Stormkit moaned and wriggled around. He stretched his legs and I sighed, "Not long from now, I'm sure." I replied. I also realized Sootkit barely talked. Even before the tragedies the Clans had suffered he hadn't spoke much. *Depression or maybe anxiety?* I wondered, narrowing my eyes.

I focused on the stars, glistening white dots sprinkled the midnight

black sky as the moon stayed still, so it seemed. I focused on the grass under my paws; it made a swish sound as the group made its way through.

"Get down and be quiet!" Cloudjaw hissed over his shoulder. I got down into a crouch just as everyone else did. "What's happening?" Sootkit whimpered. I was just about to ask the same thing. "Hush," Poppyheart whispered. It kind of made me feel better, too. But my heart continued to race.

Lilypatch looked over her shoulder and hissed, "Flesh-eaters. Stay down and be as quiet as you can!" I strained to hear better and sure enough, growling and the swishing of grass came from in front of the group.

"Lighteningice-" Sootkit called from behind me and I whipped around. "Be quiet!" I snapped before I realized what I had said. *Oh no! I can't be like that with him...* "You can't talk right now, love." I soothed quietly through Stormkits' scruff.

Sootkit looked hurt but nodded. *Maybe he's just quiet...* I looked ahead and followed the group as quiet as a mouse. I held my breath, paranoid even the slightest breath will alarm the undead.

Together, we stalked silently around the couple of roaming flesh-eaters. Cloudjaw pushed everyone along and Lilypatch led the way. Her head was slightly raised and her tail just up off the ground. We finally were far enough away that we could sit up straight.

Cloudjaw came to the front of the group once everyone was moving. "Pick up the pace, I want to be as far away from this territory as I can!" He hissed briefly over his shoulder. Lilypatch broke into a run and Cloudjaw followed. Sootkit bounced in Redfur's jaws, a heavy breath coming out every time he took a step. Stormkit started to mewl again, a syllable for every time gravity tried to pull him to the ground.

"I'm... so... ti... red... and... hung... r-ry!" He complained. I sighed. "I know, everyone else is, too. We're almost there!" Stormkit groaned but didn't reply.

Sunkit started arguing with Heatherleg about prey and I was suddenly washed over with fatigue. *My great StarClan... Could we go a day without running? Maybe no threats too?* I wished, glancing at the bright moon. Taking in huge gulps, we slowed to a stop. I had no idea where we were. It didn't smell like SpiritClan anymore.

"Where are we?" Mudpaw whispered as he sat down, panting. Cloudjaw paced, looking off into the distance. "Out of the territories... Should we keep moving, Lilypatch?" Cloudjaw breathed and then turned to Lilypatch.

She looked around. "Let everyone catch their breath then we will send a few cats out to hunt. After we've eaten, we will head toward north until the morning comes," Cloudjaw nodded, agreeing. I dropped Stormkit gently and took in as much air as I could. *I wish I was Stormkit or maybe Sootkit. That way I would have it easy and not have to run!*

Stormkit prodded at my stomach and mewled. Sootkit rushed over, tripping over his own paw. "Oof!" He mumbled as he scrambled up. Leaflitter stuck to his cheek so with a paw, I brushed it off.

Sootkit's huge eyes looked into mine and I purred. Laying on my side, I let the two suckle. "Heatherleg, is Sunkit hungry? What about you, Ebonykit?" I mewed over my shoulder, glancing over at the two kits. Heatherleg's head popped up from her legs and Sunkit hurried over, answering my question.

"I sure am!" Ebonykit gasped, scrambling over as well.

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Before we knew it, the moon was on its way down. Sunkit, Ebonykit, Stormkit, and Sootkit were yawning and my stomach was growling. Lilypatch and Heatherleg had gone out hunting, and had come back with a robin, a sparrow, and a young rabbit. It was enough for most of us to share, but Cloudjaw insisted we ate before him. The four kits were filled up and ready for a nice long nap. "We should keep going until the stars disappear." Lilypatch looked to the white warrior and Cloudjaw dipped his head.

"Hurry along!" Cloudjaw hissed. Eclipse and Lilypatch hurried away. I grabbed Stormkit, Heatherleg grasped Sunkit as she trotted by, Mudpaw snatched Ebonykit as he let out a yawn, and Redfur grabbed Sootkit as Squirreltail leaned on him, her eyes misty with pain.

Poppyheart immediately noticed her ankle was bothering her. Hurrying over, she nosed a few tiny seeds to her paws. "This may make you tired, but at least it'll help minimize the pain." Looking grateful, the red warrior licked them up and dipped her head. The tortoiseshell she-cat snatched up the herbs in their leaf bundles and then we were off. Mudpaw and Poppyheart stuck to the rear while Cloudjaw swiftly made his way to the front of the group again.

With Stormkit bouncing in my jaws, I didn't expect him to dose off, but he eventually did. Soft snoring filled my ears and warmed my heart. My kits were my everything; I didn't understand how Reedstar could just shrug off the fact that one of hit kits and mate had been eaten. If my kits were eaten alive, I'd kill the ones who killed them and then sob myself to sleep every night! I'd probably go crazy, too. I just wouldn't be able to handle such a thing... My heart ached for Otterkit and Birdfeather.

The group didn't take their time at all, making sure we rushed toward the big star. I was pushing my limits; with a growling stomach and a weight in my mouth, I wasn't sure how long I could go before collapsing. My leg muscles had begun to cramp up, but I knew it was no excuse to stop.

Stormkit was still asleep as he dangled from my teeth, a soft snore puffing out of his cute pink nose. I glanced over at Sootkit and noticed that he, too, had fallen asleep.

Cloudjaw put his tail up as he stopped and we knew instantly that we were to halt too. "What is it, Cloudjaw?" Eclipse meowed, peeking over the shoulders of the group. I took a step to the side to get a clear look at what he had stopped for. *More of the infected?* I wondered, my heartbeat speeding up. To my surprise, there were no flesh-eaters roaming.

Instead, we had come to a Thunderpath that separated the open

field that we had traveled through to a thick forest. We all peered wearily around the silent, black ground. The monster stench was stale and nothing raced past us, even after several silent moments. "Do you think the monsters died, too?" Heatherleg murmured, taking a step forward. Cloudjaw shrugged and continued to look left and then right, his ears perked up for any noise.

The white tom placed his paw on the long black path, possibly looking to feel any vibrations. After another heartbeat, he stood up straight and started to pad across. "There doesn't seem to be any monsters around anymore. We can cross." He meowed. The group followed, though I hesitated even setting my paws on the black surface. Poppyheart paused and blinked at me with sympathy, "Come on, if any monsters were still alive, they would have gone by already!" Nodding, I finally followed the group.

We were the last two to cross, and as we entered the thick woods, I noticed there were still no monsters. Relief washed over me as I followed the group.

The darkness was fading as we entered the dense forest filled with pine trees, cedar trees, as well as cypress trees. Even with the sun rising, the trees' shadows kept the undergrowth dark and cool. "Lilypatch and I will look around and get some prey. Stay here, if anything comes by, climb the trees and stay put!" Cloudjaw ordered and we all nodded.

I set Stormkit down and he made no effort to get comfortable. Instead, he curled up in the dead leaves and continued to sleep. Redfur laid Sootkit down beside his brother and I dipped my head in thanks. Mudpaw set Ebonykit down beside the two kits as well. I heard the two leaders scurry off and my eyes started to droop.

"Get some sleep. I'll stay awake with Eclipse," Redfur murmured. I curled up beside my two kits with Birdfeather's kit and curled myself around them. No one argued, they all just laid down to finally have a good rest.

Chapter 24 - Mudpaw's P.O.V.

Several voices woke me up. Blinking open my eyes, I was shocked by the bright sunlight. I sat up and rubbed one of my eyes with a paw. "Mudpaw, you're awake!" Lilypatch purred, her gaze filled with warmth. I nodded and stretched until my legs quivered.

Redfur was still sleeping but Eclipse wasn't. Lilypatch and Cloudjaw dipped their heads to me. "No troubles?" I asked as I shook out my fur. The two former deputies both shook their heads. "None," Cloudjaw murmured without looking me in the eye.

I tipped my head to the side. *What are you hiding?* Something was up and I had to get to the bottom of it. "There's something you're not telling me..." I growled, narrowing my eyes.

"We came across-" Lilypatch started but Cloudjaw slapped her jaws shut with his paw mid-sentence. "We can't tell him! He's only an apprentice," Cloudjaw muttered, glaring deep into Lilypatch's eyes. She rolled her eyes.

"Hey, I'm just as mature as you two! I've been through just as much as anyone... Tell me!" I pleaded. My curiosity was boiling inside of me. *Was it the herd? Twolegs? More cats that survived?* I wondered, clawing at the ground with unease.

Cloudjaw lowered his voice and the two group leaders came closer, "We saw a group of dead cats, newly eaten to the bone. I made note where it is before I came here. It is right in the center of our path. On the good side, we got lots of prey." My jaw dropped.

"Are they going to turn?" I asked. Lilypatch and Cloudjaw shrugged, "Beats me. They were almost completely eaten, but I'm sure their brains' weren't touched," Lilypatch mewed.

The white warrior narrowed his eyes at me and then gestured with his muzzle to the small pile of prey. "Now, eat up before someone takes what you want." Cloudjaw mumbled. I nodded.

A pile of dead prey lay behind them. I padded over, my mouth watering and my stomach growling like a lion. I picked out a pigeon - my personal favorite - and ate it so fast I got the hiccups.

"I'm surprised you haven't puked! Eating that fast might make you heave..." Poppyheart yawned. Shrugging, I looked up at her tortoiseshell figure. Her eyes were half open, but after fluffing out her fur and letting out another yawn, she seemed to wake up fully. *Did she hear what Cloudjaw and Lilypatch said? I wonder what she'd think?*

Poppyheart didn't wait for a reply, instead woke up Redfur to share the sparrow she had picked out.

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After several heartbeats of just laying there in the blazing heat and watching others wake, Cloudjaw finally announced we should start getting ready to leave. When I had woken up, it was in the middle of the day already. By the time we all had eaten and stretched, the sun was sinking. Stars started to reappear as the sun made its way down the horizon-line. Shades of pink and purple cascaded the sky below the sun. It was colorful and pleasing.

Too bad it couldn't be as peaceful as we had all hoped it would become.

"How is your ankle, Squirreltail?" Redfur murmured as he sniffed around the wrap. The rush was wrapped safely around it and Squirreltail barely flinched when Redfur nudged it with his nose.

The red she-cat glanced at it and shrugged. "I can almost put weight on it now. It feels much better," Squirreltail replied with a nonchalant look in her amber eyes. Redfur nodded and took apart the leaves with one claw. Poppyheart joined in and set down the leaves she had brought along.

"Almost done? We have to head out in a bit. Sun's going down, stars are coming out..." Cloudjaw murmured to the two medicine cats, pacing back and forth. He let out a sigh. Redfur glared back at him with narrowed eyes, "You should have thought of that while you let the rest of us sleep in. This could have been done a while ago." He

muttered with the twitch of an ear and then turned back to his sister.

Poppyheart shooed the white warrior away with her tail, "This takes time. The stars will be out plenty long." She insisted and Cloudjaw simply paced elsewhere, his tail dragging through the grass.

I had to admit it: it felt like seasons before they had dressed her ankle. Poppyheart's herb bundle was half the size of what it originally was; the rush and bindweed completely gone. The moon continued to make its way up, the stars twinkling in the sea of dark blue.

"Finally..." Lilypatch muttered under her breath and then announced out loud, "Alright! Lets get going."

I took the rear again with Ebonykit on my back. Poppyheart padded beside me while Lighteningice had Stormkit, Heatherleg had Sunkit, Redfur had Sootkit, and Squirreltail - who was leaning on Redfur - stayed in front of us. Eclipse, Cloudjaw, and Lilypatch led the way north.

"Where do you think we're headed?" I asked Poppyheart. She didn't turn to look at me, but muttered through the herbs, "I'm not too sure, Mudpaw. North is the only answer. Who knows? Maybe we'll run into a Clan!" I shrugged. *I doubt that. We are the only Clans! I am positive of it. Surely StarClan would have mentioned there were more?*

I didn't respond to her, just kept looking forward. The only thing I could really see were their tails as they swung with each step and the backs' of their heads. Squirreltails' tail was especially waving in the wind. She kept her hind leg propped up as she padded along, keeping her shoulder against her brother.Not one of the cats in the group were plump, none of us had shiny, well groomed pelts... *A lot has changed,* I glanced down at my paws.

Glancing up, I could see clouds roaming across the starry sky. It was a navy blue, darkening to pitch black as the night rolled on. The wind carried whispers that seemed to speak to me, swaying the trees' branches softly. Branches above creaked creepily and the grass wavered. It's tall blades brushed my chest as we pushed on.

The forest seemed to dense up, spruces and oaks became all pines and cedar in a matter of steps. There was even a large redwood tree, its bark gnarled, showing its age. In the very center of its trunk was a hole, suggesting a bird or maybe a squirrel once lived there. "Where is the North Star? We went off track!" Lighteningice fretted and I looked forward to the sky. Sure enough, there were just other smaller stars. Scanning the open sky, I quickly caught sight of The North Star; it was a sharp left turn away.

He must've done that so we didn't near the gruesome sight... I thought, looking forward again.

As if he read my mind, Cloudjaw replied to the worried queen. "There was an obstacle that way. I thought it was best to steer clear of it." No one responded. Ebonykit fastened his tiny claws into my pelt and whispered, "Does that mean there will be those... monsters?"

"I don't know. Either way, we'll keep you and the other kits safe." I reassured him quietly, looking over my shoulder to nod to him.

The group froze as a scream echoed through the treetops. I flinched as Ebonykit's claws sunk in farther. "Help! Someone!" The mystery cat yowled. It sounded close. Immediately I set Ebonykit down to go see who was in trouble. Cloudjaw looked briefly at Lilypatch, "Stay here with the group. I'll go check it out." He dipped his head to her and then took off. I rushed to catch up with him. "I'm coming, too!" I called after him.

I could have sworn he sighed, but he didn't order me to stay back. Cloudjaw narrowed his eyes at me and hissed, "Hurry up then." Picking up my pace, I followed close on his tail.

"Heeellp!" The mysterious cat wailed. Birds flew out of the trees in a hurry, scattering among the dark sky and calling out to others. The two of us glanced through the trees until I caught sight of a cat dodging three others.

"Over there!" I gasped and pelted toward the four figures. Cloudjaw ran in sync beside me. Three bloody cats surrounded an injured black and white tom. The tom glanced over at us and then back to

the infected. "StarClan answered my prayers!" He whimpered as we neared him. I hurtled myself at the bloody flesh-eater closest to him and shouldered it to the ground. Cloudjaw dove for the next one, knocking it over with a grunt.

"Thank you, thank you so much!" The black and white tom looked to me and then to Cloudjaw, his eyes glimmering with relief.

Cloudjaw nudged the shocked tom forward, "Come with us!" He pushed down the other flesh-eater. I went to the tom and urged him to move. He was as tall as Cloudjaw - possibly taller - but he was no more than skin and bones. With a sunken in stomach and cheekbones sticking out, he seemed like he hadn't had a real meal in moons. His muzzle was speckled heavily with grey, and old scars scattered his sleek body.

The tom limped as quickly as he could with me to support him. I only noticed Cloudjaw hadn't of followed when I had came into view with the rest of the group. Lilypatch and Heatherleg hurried to meet me half way. "Who's this?" Lilypatch sniffed his pelt, ears flat to her head, while Heatherleg let the tom lean on him. I shrugged and dashed away again, toward Cloudjaw and the three flesh-eaters.

If he would leave those brain-dead idiots alone*, we could get moving without any trouble! We would be able to outrun them. I have yet to see a flesh-eater who can run.* Turning from the path Eclipse had shown us, I hurried to grab Cloudjaw.

As I padded toward the sound of moaning, I called out to him. The white warrior was fighting the three. None of them looked weakened and showed no signs of pain as he struck them over and over.

"Come on, this is south not east!" I jumped as Redfur padded farther ahead, "We can avoid them instead of worrying about your mouse-brain getting injured!" The medicine cat yowled. Cloudjaw turned around and started to run toward us, but as he took off, he tripped over his front bloody paw.

I pelted toward him as the flesh-eaters opened their jaws...

But it was too late. Even as I shoved the first one I could get to away from him, the other two had already sunken their teeth into his flesh. The flesh-eaters growled hungrily as Cloudjaw let out a ear-piercing screech. I halted, my jaw hitting the ground. I cowered away, knowing it was too late and too dangerous to interfere with. The fur along my spine bristled up as his warm blood splattered my face.

Cloudjaw stuttered, but no real sentence came out. He looked up at me, bewilderment and horror flashing through his fading amber eyes. I let out a shriek. "No!"

Chapter 25 - Cloudjaw's P.O.V.

I opened my mouth but nothing came out. Stutters from no particular sentence escaped my jaws as I looked up to Mudpaw. Horror filled the young toms eyes as he backed away, speechless. Thick blood oozed from the flesh wound. The flesh-eaters surrounded me, their dripping jaws gaping and their eyes on the prize.

"Nooooo!!" Mudpaw screeched, his eyes wider than an owl's huge, mysterious gaze. My heart began to beat as if there were a bird in my chest and my head throbbed. I felt the teeth of the flesh-eaters chomp into me, but soon shock set in and I suddenly couldn't hear or feel anything. I let out a howl but it didn't register in my brain.

The pain came in flashes; coming and going, just like my consciousness. It was excruciating, a burning sensation travelling to my brain. I didn't want to be left alone, but Mudpaw would be eaten along with me. *He has a life to live... it can't end because of me.*

"Go! Tell the group-" I managed to gasp out. I had to stop as the flesh-eaters chewed more and more on me. I tried to kick, but the muscles in my thighs had been ripped out and shredded. One grabbed my tail and bit down. Screaming again, I squeezed my eyes shut. Panting, I growled at Mudpaw with my teeth clenched so hard, I could've busted my teeth. "Tell the group to move on! Hurry!" Mudpaw hesitated, fear and grief making his blue eyes glossy. His hesitation didn't last long; within moments the tom was bounding away.

It'll be over soon, I promised myself. *Soon I'll be with Whitetooth...*

As the infected savages continued to maul on my stained, torn open body, my head grew dizzy. I didn't even feel my head drop as the darkness consumed me.

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Suddenly, I realized I was awake again. Am I in StarClan? I wondered, but I was soon filled with dread. I expected to be welcomed by Whitetooth and Birdfeather, but that wasn't the case.

I was stumbling around, daylight burning my skin. I tried to stop moving so I could find out where I was, but I quickly noticed I wasn't in control. My eyes stared at the dying grass and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't stop, yell out, or even change direction. *What's happening? Why aren't I in StarClan?*

I tried to scream, but all that came out was a low growl. *Is this what it's like to die now? Is this how Whitetooth and Birdfeather felt? Did this nightmare ever end for them? Do I have to live this way forever, until someone puts me out of this dreadful misery?* Thoughts whirled through my distraught head. *No! NO! I have to find a way to die... I can't be like this forever!*

There was no way to avoid the situation. *I'm trapped. Trapped in the mangled, bloody body of my undead corpse.*

As I tried to let out another screech, the words I wanted to say only stayed in my thoughts. *Lilypatch! Mudpaw! Someone, anyone... Kill me!* Praying to StarClan, I watched my deformed body wobble around aimlessly.

No! This can't be how I live... This isn't fair!

Chapter 26 - Lilypatch's P.O.V.

Sudden screeches filled the air after Mudpaw had left again. I glanced into the distance as my heartbeat quickened. "I hope they're okay..." Heatherleg muttered to Lighteningice. The forest was filled with unease.

Narrowing my eyes, I turned to face the newcomer. "And who are you?" I hissed. He was black and white with a wound on his front leg. His eyes were a bright light green.

The tom rose his chin. "I am Blazefang. You may not know of the four Clans, ThunderClan, ShadowClan, RiverClan, and WindClan, but that's where I used to live. Where we *all* used to live... Until those... senseless, insane, *disturbing* creatures came in and ruined everything we had," He spat, glaring sideways. I flicked my ear. Blazefang was silent for a few heartbeats but eventually continued, "I was in ShadowClan. I was just about to become deputy when those stupid infected pigs ruined it! The Clans are no more... Just cats scattered around trying to survive, desperate for shelter and prey." He clawed at the ground.

"ShadowClan? ThunderClan? WindClan? RiverClan? There were four Clans only a days travel from our home, and we didn't know?" Poppyheart whispered in disbelief. Lighteningice stared at the tom with distrustful eyes. She kept her kits and Ebonykit close with her tail.

Blazefang shrugged. "I suppose so. Are you cats rogues?" He looked to each of us with uncertainty.

Do I dare spill our life too? Would it even matter now? "No, we came from Clans just like you. I came from LightClan, where I was the deputy. DarkClan and SpiritClan were the other two Clans. Not many of the Clans remain... The only cats who survived thus far in SpiritClan are Poppyheart, Cloudjaw, and Ebonykit," Ebonykit's black ears perked up from out of Lighteningice's pure white fur at the sound of his name. The tom nodded once and continued to

listen, "We... came across the same problem. It almost wiped us all out in the beginning but a few of us managed to survive the first bit. But, a tragedy here and a tragedy there brought us to just thirteen of us." I murmured, looking around at the tired and skinny group.

Poppyheart sniffed the toms wound and without asking, began to treat it. Her eyes were hollow, emotionless. She chewed up her withering herbs and smeared it on before wrapping it with the remaining cobwebs. Her bundle was no more than a couple of leaves.

Blazefang nodded and Eclipse looked to the sky. The moon was at the top of the sky. "It's crazy how not long ago we were all fighting for a territory that is so useless to us now." Squirreltail croaked. Through the corner of my eye I watched Redfur stroke her spine with his fluffy tail.

We sat in silence, not even the kits made a peep. A sudden yowl made me jolt. Birds took off from the trees where Mudpaw had ran off to. "Was that... Cloudjaw?" I mewed. No one answered as another short scream echoed through the air.

We waited again. Poppyheart paced behind Heatherleg and Lighteningice. My pelt bushed and I rose to stand, glancing behind me. It seemed like forever before the sound of thumping came. Mudpaws' brown pelt came scampering toward the group. Before he even reached us, he began to yowl. "Go, go, go!" I swallowed and instantly I knew the bad news... *Cloudjaw is gone...*

Everyone scrambled to their paws. Lighteningice took Stormkit, Redfur grasped Sootkit in his jaws, Heatherleg grabbed Sunkit, and I scurried to get Ebonykit. "Cloudjaw wants us to keep moving and for his sake, I think we should! There were flesh-eaters coming toward the sound of his screams, and I'm sure they'll be able to follow my scent!" Mudpaw panted. I hesitated and set Ebonykit down to speak. "What happened?" I gasped even though I knew exactly what had happened. Swallowing, I waited for him to spit it out.

Lighteningice let out a whimper; she looked like she was about to

collapse. Poppyheart let her head hang from a few tail-lengths away.

"For the kits' sake, I'm going to make it brief. Cloudjaw tripped... He told me to get us out of here before it's too late." Mudpaw whispered. His eyes were wide with horror, staring at his paws.

Blazefang stood up as well and didn't comment on the white toms death. "Are you looking for a place to stay? I'm not sure if it's true, but I think the Clans have made a deal and found shelter... I could show you the way and introduce you to them." The black-and-white tom suggested.

I exchanged a look with Redfur and Heatherleg. After all, they were the closest to the oldest and wisest.

"We should go. What do we have to lose?" Redfur mewed, shrugging. My tail lashed. "What do we have to lose? Do you not realize we just lost someone? We have *each other* to lose," I growled through clenched teeth as my fur spiked up along my spine. He narrowed his eyes but didn't argue. "We're all important and you think we have nothing to lose? Are you that hopeless?"

Redfur's ears went flat to his head and he backed away as I unsheathed my claws and took a few steps toward him. I hadn't of realized I was threatening him. "Calm down, Lilypatch!" Mudpaw gasped, blocking my path. I noticed he had his claws out, too.

"Don't *ever* tell me to calm down again!" I snapped, glaring into his dark blue eyes. I felt someone grab my scruff and pull me back. I whirled around to meet Eclipse's mesmerizing gaze. "I didn't mean it like that, you should know that!" Redfur scoffed behind me.

I only glared back, pushing Mudpaw and Eclipse out of my way. "Hurry up and take me to where you wanted to take us." I muttered, looking into the silent, lingering pine forest. Snatching Ebonykit, I waited for Blazefang to limp away.

The ShadowClan tom took the lead and I hurried to pad in beside him. *How could Redfur just say that? "Didn't mean it like that" he says? Right! He knew what he was saying. Did Reedstar rub off on him too*

much?

As we trekked through the thick dim forest, regret took over my anger. I let out a sigh. *I'll have to apologize. Redfur didn't mean anything... I'm just so tired of the shock of death. Why can't I just awaken from this terrible dream?*

Blazefang hobbled on, his leg propped up so he didn't put pressure on it. I followed him, fully aware that the group was close in on my heels. He continued straight on. We seemed to be trapped by trees as they hovered above, darkening my sight. The sky seemed so much darker than usual. I felt so alone even with the company of twelve others. Cloudjaw had almost become a best friend.

How is it possible to lose someone so easily, someone you've bonded with? Many deaths had occurred before Cloudjaws, but only then did I realize how strong death was. It lingered around each corner like a sly fox, and it stunk of one too. The wounds the fox had on everyone scarred severely and would forever be there.

Attempting to get Cloudjaw - and everyone else that we had lost - off of my mind, I focused on the scenery. The pines seemed to become more dense as we continued through the darkness. The ground was covered in needles from the pine trees and occasional leaves. Needles stuck into my pads and every now and again I had to shake out my paws to get rid of them. *How do cats live in this territory?* A chilly breeze blew through my pelt and sent a shiver down my back. That night was especially cold and I noticed no stars could be seen. Every now and again the thick treetops gave way to see the dark blue sky, but thick clouds covered the sparkles above.

A path appeared in front of us and Blazefang didn't think twice about crossing. I halted, and so did the rest of the group. "Aren't there monsters here?" I hissed through Ebonykit's scruff, looking both ways several times. "It doesn't *smell* like monsters!" The kit squeaked. Ebonykit was right, there was no rancid smell, and the ground didn't rumble from their round, black paws. Blazefang paused in the center of the path and glanced over his shoulder.

"Now? No," It sounded like he was purring about my question. "It's a graveyard now... Besides, this was abandoned long before the

infected took over." Blazefang explained as he continued to cross.

I swallowed but reluctantly, I sprinted across the dirt path. The dirt path was covered with leaf-litter and they crunched under my paw steps. I waited patiently for the rest of the group to scurry across the abandoned path.

"We aren't too far from the lake." Blazefang stated over his shoulder. I didn't reply as the four kits mewled for food.

Together we trekked away from the path and followed the black-and-white tom down a slope through spindly oaks and spruces and thick pine trees. We broke into a trot. We couldn't go very fast because of Blazefang's injury, but we were at a nice pace. *We could be getting somewhere... More cats, more protection... Poppyheart and Redfur will be able to get more herbs and make a medicine den...*

By the time we came to another Twoleg den, the sun was making its way up into the sky. The navy blue sky became purple around the horizon, and then pink. I looked left to see the Twoleg den was absolutely destroyed. A monster was crashed into the wall, on its side. Smoke still curled out of the front, its eyes that used to shine yellow were cracked and lifeless. I could hear the familiar groan of an infected creature, and I wondered if it were a Twoleg.

Another abandoned dirt path came ahead as the trees thinned out. It curved to the left and seemed shorter on the other side. A splatter of blood stained the dirt ahead. Blazefang avoided touching it and each of us followed.

My eyes followed the blood trail to its source, and I nearly puked up my last meal. Its stomach was torn open, blood had trailed to the puddle that had formed a few tail-lengths from the body. What was left of its body was hanging off of the glistening ribs. Blazefang obviously tried not to look at it. Even with its eyes a milky white, tail half gone and one leg departed completely from its joint, the smell was more overwhelming.

Flies floated around the corpse and the trail of blood that streamed to a puddle at my paws. *What a way to ruin my appetite...* I thought as I swallowed several times. Ebonykit let out a whimper and I

hurried on for the sake of the small, innocent tom.

I forced my eyes to wander forward so I didn't actually heave. "We're almost there," Blazefang reminded us. The group was already across the dirt path and I had to hurry to catch up.

A broken down Twolegnest sat alone with a small trail coming from the entrance. I trotted to the front with Blazefang. "This is the old ShadowClan territory," He growled without looking at us. "Where more death occurred than you'd think, where the blood of the innocent was expelled onto our territory and where we lost all faith. Welcome."

*****

September 24th, 2017: Hey there everyone, I'm still editing! Hope it's better than it was when I made it at 14 years old lmao

Chapter 27 - Poppyheart's P.O.V.

Blazefang sighed after he welcomed us to his old territory. He gazed through the pines wistfully as his tail lashed from side to side. Glancing around I quickly noticed there were no live cats travelling through the quiet forest. Placing my remaining herbs on the ground, I whispered, "Where is everyone?"

The tom turned to face me, his gaze cold. "Scattered," Blazefang turned his head forward again, "We'll have to search for them." And with that, he began to lead us farther down the slope. Snatching my herbs, I followed in with Lilypatch and Blazefang leading. I watched his leg carefully as he slowly started to use it. Narrowing me eyes, I warned, "Be careful. I don't want my work on your leg to go to waste!" Blazefang only dipped his head.

As the group trekked in silence, the four kits began to mewl and complain. Lighteningice did her best to hush them - probably more out of fear than compassion - but even my stomach was beginning to growl and twist with pain. Before I could ask to stop and hunt, Blazefang spoke. "They'd most likely be by the lake or on the island. If they aren't there, they're either all dead or they left."

"Why were you alone when we found you?" Mudpaw asked, hurrying forward to pad beside him. Ebonykit groaned with hunger. Blazefang sighed and for a moment, I thought he was going to ignore the question. Eventually he replied solemnly, "My selfishness got the best of me and I decided to fend for myself. Since I found your group, I thought it would be nice to bring you to the remaining cats."

I glanced around as the dense forest ended. I noticed a lake was to my left with a Twoleg half-bridge. We traveled through a neat grass square and my ears suddenly perked up as I heard the sound of rushing water. Another Twolegplace could be seen in the distance. Horses lay in their fields with their bodies torn open. A Twoleg

paced in the fences.

"This way, hurry before that Twoleg breaks through the fence." Blazefang hissed, rushing toward the trees by the sound of the river.

I rushed forward to catch up to him. "Can anyone swim?" He mewed when we got to the rivers edge. We all exchanged worried looks. "I'm the only warrior from DarkClan and we had a marsh. Not that we really swam much but I know how." Heatherleg mewed with Sunkit at her paws.

"You're the last one from DarkClan?" Blazefang asked, eyes narrowed in thought. Heatherleg shook her head and gestured to Sunkit. "Ambersun was her mother but..." She trailed off, swallowing.

I glanced over at Ebonykit as he squirmed in Mudpaws jaws. *Are we really the last ones from SpiritClan?* I gulped. "Ebonykit and I are the only ones left from SpiritClan..." I breathed.

"That's right..." Redfur gasped. "I never realized that till now..." Lighteningice stated, giving me a sympathetic glance. "How am I supposed to keep my Clan alive? I can't have a mate and even if I could, the kits would be half-Clan! StarClan would never forgive me for breaking the medicine code." I shook my head, my eyes round.

"It'll be alright, Poppyheart. StarClan will understand! We'll make sure to keep you and Ebonykit safe." Mudpaw whispered as he brushed his fur together with mine. "Thanks," I smiled down at him. He sure was growing at a rapid pace. *I remember when this first happened he was as small as a new apprentice. Now he is almost my height!*

"Well it looks like we'll have to take the stepping stones. Follow me," Blazefang sighed, dashing away with his one injured front paw propped up. We followed him as he had ordered. I didn't know if I should trust him or not. Cloudjaw certainly wouldn't of. SpiritClan warriors always had a history of not trusting others, though...

I decided to go out of my comfort zone and follow him anyway. *I'll*

have to trust him. If I'm going to find a way to survive, this is how.

I slowed to a stop with the group just behind me. The river was churning quickly but I assumed with the lack of rain, the river was lower than usual. You could see the dirt under the grass shore on the other side. "We could easily get across this!" Eclipse insisted, jumping in and wading through. Blazefang halted to watch her. The current pulled at her dark legs but she trekked through anyway. It was barely past her knees at the deepest point. She got across with barely any trouble.

Mudpaw and Lilypatch jumped in while Redfur - with Sootkit in his jaws - let Squirreltail go in front of him on the stepping stones. Lighteningice hesitated before finally going across on the stepping stones, her tail trembling in fear. Stormkit let out a purr, "I seen a fish!"

Heatherleg went next with Sunkit grasped in her mouth. With a fear for water, I took the easy way and hopped across with ease. Blazefang followed on my tail. After crossing, I made sure Blazefang made it across before I continued on.

"This way, hurry!" He meowed and scrambled to the front.

I followed him in sync with the others just behind me. We halted at the edge of the marsh by the shore of the lake. An island was just out of the marsh and in the lake with a tree-bridge leading to a slightly bigger island.

My heart skipped a beat in fear as loud growling came from behind us. Lighteningice gasped and ran in front of the group, scurrying away. We all picked up the pace, soaking our paws in the mucky water. Grass from under the water wrapped around my paws and soon my legs as we went deeper.

Cats sat at the edge of the smaller island, eyes grim and their bones sticking out. One was a sleek tom, black fur with mesmerizing, bold blue eyes. The other was a she-cat with a light orange pelt and one white paw. Her bright green eyes made her a fairly pretty she-cat. *Reedstar would've been all over her.* I rolled my eyes at the thought.

Another black tom was at the edge of the island, eyes glaring our way as if we had killed their own. His eyes were a dark blue and his pelt thicker than the other black tom. I gulped, suddenly hostile and frightened. Tension filled the air as we entered with silence.

The first black tom mumbled something to a light brown tabby tom and the brown tom dashed off. Lighteningice stopped at the edge of the island and so did we. My belly fur barely touched the water, but I was aware that I was trembling as if I had been soaked head-to-toe.

The orange she-cat and first black tom stood up. We stood in awkward silence until a white tom with huge black paws and ears came over with the brown tabby tom.

"Blazefang, who have you brought? I thought you had left us." The huge, white tom grumbled. He sounded more curious than angry.

Blazefang raised his chin. "I just needed some time for myself... Anyway, these cats saved me. They're from past ShadowClan's territory. What were the names again?" He stated and then turned to me.

Setting down my herbs on the island's ground, I cleared my throat and managed to splutter out, "I was the medicine cat from SpiritClan, then there was LightClan and DarkClan." The white tom nodded to me and then turned to Blazefang again. "Why have you brought them here?" The white tom asked, looking at each cat in our group.

"We were dying back in our old territories. We have no prey left there. The flesh-eaters have taken over and we have no place to stay. As the closest cat to a leader, I would like to know if we can stay here for a little bit, just so we can get healthy again..." Lilypatch murmured with her eyes wide and hopeful.

The black tom flicked his ear and continued to glare at us. Meanwhile, the big white tom narrowed his eyes. The cats on the island all exchanged glances. "What have you done for us? Do something for us and we shall give you something in return." The white tom meowed, chin raised.

"I could get herbs for you and your Clanmates." Redfur offered and I dipped my head. "I will, too." I insisted quietly.

"I was a deputy, I'm great at fighting." Lilypatch meowed. "I'm just as good!" Mudpaw chirped after setting Ebonykit down. Squirreltail toko a step forward, "I used to be great at running, hunting and fighting... Until I injured my leg." Squirreltail muttered.

The white tom looked over everyone of us then flicked his tail. "Sniff them over for any bite wounds." He ordered to the brown tom and orange she-cat.

The orange she-cat gestured for me to come to her and the brown tom gestured for Lilypatch to come to him. I grabbed my herbs and set them down at her paws. She sniffed me over, every bit of me. "What's your name?" She murmured.

"Poppyheart, I was once the medicine cat of SpiritClan." I responded. She dipped her head then meowed, "Alright, wait at the tree-bridge."

"Name?" The light brown tabby tom growled. "Lilypatch, once deputy of LightClan." The tom sent her over to me and we waited together, watching them sniff the group.

"Mudpaw, from LightClan." Mudpaw mewed with his chin high. "This is Ebonykit from SpiritClan."

The tom continued to ask for the others' names. "Redfur, once medicine cat from LightClan." Redfur murmured. The tom sniffed over Sootkit and he shrunk away, his fur spiking up. "This is Sootkit, from LightClan. He doesn't talk much."

He had to wait for Squirreltail to get checked out. The orange she-cats ears pricked up, her eyes softening when Squirreltail mentioned her name.

"Squirreltail, once warrior of LightClan." Squirreltail muttered with her leg propped up. "Squirreltail? I'm Squirrel*flight*!" The she-cat purred. Her bubbly personality helped with the tension.

Squirreltail's eyes softened. "Really? Cool," She mewed.

It felt safer. It felt like, even though we knew nothing about these cats, I felt stronger near them, like even though we were only newcomers to them that they'd still save us in the night if we were under attack. *Maybe something good* will *come out of this journey?*

Chapter 28 - Heatherleg's P.O.V.

I set down Sunkit to be examined by the tom. He sniffed her over and then started on me. "You don't look like her mother," He stated with the flick of an ear. I nodded and swallowed a purr. "I'm not. Ambersun, her real mother, was my best friend. I vowed to keep a close eye on her until the day I died." I replied.

He dipped his head and gestured to the growing amount of cats at the edge of the island. I grabbed Sunkit. "Name?" He mewed before I left. Sunkit chirped up, "I'm Sunkit from DarkClan!" His eyes filled with warmth but didn't reply. "Heatherleg, once a warrior in DarkClan." I dipped my head to him and he returned it. I padded off.

Redfur sat under a low hanging branch with Sootkit. The small tom chased a leaf that skidded away with the wind. I sat down beside him and put Sunkit onto the ground. Sootkit stumbled over and Sunkit chased him. Lighteningice and Stormkit finally made their way toward us. She set down her kit before she was even a tail-length away to let him join in on the play fight. He tore away and pounced on his brother with a yowl.

After what seemed to be only a few short heartbeats, the white tom spoke up.

"It seems you all are clean," He glanced around at our group and nodded. "I am Blackstar, one of the three remaining leaders the Clans. One left with a group of our old warriors in hopes to survive better. This is Crowfeather-" He gestured to the sleek black tom with the harsh blue eyes. "Squirrelflight," Then to the orange she-cat that Squirreltail had gotten along so well with. "Thornclaw and Reedwhisker." Blackstar gestured to the brown tom and then to the other black tom.

"We do welcome you and wish you the best of luck here. I am glad

you came here and offered to help in exchange for shelter." Blackstar informed us, dipping his broad head to us.

Blackstar led the way away with our group behind him. Blazefang limped to the front to pad beside his leader. Squirrelflight, Reedwhisker, Thornclaw, and Crowfeather stayed behind.

With Sunkit grasped in my jaws and my eyes heavy, we crossed the tree-bridge and came into the camp. Thorns, bracken, and dead trees lined the island. I expected more cats, but there were surprisingly not as many.

Blazefang turned to Poppyheart and Lilypatch, "I told you they were scattered. Not many decided to stay with us - like Blackstar said - in hopes to accomplish a land without flesh-eaters." I kept my head down. My pelt burned as looks flashed our way. The unknown cats stared for longer than I expected.

Blackstar stood in the center and raised his voice, "These are newcomers from behind ShadowClans old territory. They've come from SpiritClan, LightClan, and DarkClan." Blackstar turned to me. "I noticed you and Sunkit are the last from DarkClan." Then turned to Poppyheart, "And you're the last from SpiritClan, I see?" We both nodded. I dropped Sunkit gently and she huddled into my stomach.

"We lost Reedstar to the gorge at the edge of LightClan's territory. He was bat-crazy anyway." Poppyheart sighed. Mudpaw let out a hiss at the mention of Reedstar. Hackles raised and eyes to a slit, he growled through clenched teeth, "He killed Snowpaw! She was my best friend and he threw her to the flesh-eaters!"

Blackstar's eyes widened and took a moment to reply. "So, I assume no one misses him?" The muscular tom mewed and we all shook our heads. "All he wanted was power," Redfur spat.

"Crystalstar was LightClan's leader and Redfur is LightClan's medicine cat. Our leader didn't survive the first day. Cloudjaw was SpiritClan's deputy, and he recently died saving Blazefang." Lilypatch sighed. Blackstar nodded. "What about DarkClan's deputy, medicine cat and leader?" Blackstar asked me.

Swallowing nervously, I took a step forward and explained, "Leopardstar was her name. She... went insane. We think she was half-infected a few days before we came here. Darkheart was our deputy. He was the first to become infected in the Clans and killed most of our Clanmates... He confessed to travelling to Twolegplace and getting bitten. Then there was Pebblefur, the medicine cat. Her and her apprentice Timberpaw were killed the first day as well." I stared off into the distance. It felt like a thorn was jabbing my heart at the reminder that DarkClan would never be the same, nor the other two Clans. *We took everything we had for granted... We may have thanked StarClan for our fresh-kill and warm seasons, but it was never enough. Now we have nothing but the few of us left.*

I avoided eye contact. "I see... What a terrible fate. We have all suffered, and we know how you feel." Blackstar replied, shaking his head. A strong tabby tom with a long scar down his shoulder padded toward us from the crowd. His gaze was dark but posed no threat. "Well, as long as you stay safe you could keep your Clans going like we are. Plus, you're welcome here as long as you do things for us in return for shelter."

"This is Bramblestar, once leader of ThunderClan. I was once leader of ShadowClan. Mistystar is here as well, the leader of RiverClan." Blackstar stated. We dipped our heads to him as he did the same. A tall, grey she-cat with bright blue eyes padded toward us gracefully. "Welcome," She purred, giving warm glanced to the kits in particular.

"Onestar was the one to take most of the surviving cats to a "better home". He was WindClan's leader." Bramblestar growled. "He was always so unreasonable..." Blackstar sighed.

A few cats came over to greet us happily, but a few just kept their distance. Eclipse made sure she kept her distance from everyone. She was comfortable around the small group of us, but the others that *we* didn't even know seemed to get to her. Especially because there were more than she was used to.

Eclipse shuffled her paws nervously with her head down. Sunkit grabbed a stray feather and and taunted Stormkit with it. The small tom let out a growl and chased her. "Can't catch me!" Sunkit

retorted, running in circles.

Meanwhile, Sootkit sat by himself staring off into the sky with his mouth open wide and eyes rounder than an owl's. Lighteningice nudged Sootkit to his paws and insisted he play too. To my relief, he joined in. Ebonykit scampered over and snatched the feather from Sunkit when she wasn't looking. "Hey!" She whined and her eyes flashed with hurt, but almost instantly she was back in the game. As I watched the four kits tumble around and squeal, I hadn't of realized a cat had come to sit beside me.

"Hi! I'm Leafpool, I thought I should welcome you." I jumped, surprised, but when I looked at the brown she-cat who had spoken, her amber eyes reassured me.

I dipped my head, "Hello, Leafpool. I'm Heatherleg." She gave me a polite smile and padded off to say hello to others. A ginger tom padded over and also dipped his head. "I think it's great to have newcomers. Welcome, I'm Rowanclaw, former deputy of ShadowClan." He greeted me and I nodded a greeting, "Hello, Rowanclaw. I'm Heatherleg, once a warrior of DarkClan."

These cats seem nice. I expected cold-blooded killers, but they are... just as normal as our Clans.

Another orange tom padded over, but this tom had a lot more muscle than Rowanclaw and his bright pelt was striped. He raised his broad head high. "I am Lionblaze from ThunderClan. Do you want me to give you an idea at who everyone is?" The tom asked. I swallowed again, but nodded reluctantly.

Sunkit bounded over and purred. "Hello!" She chirped. "I'm Sunkit!"

Lionblaze dipped his head to her with a bright gaze. "Well, aren't you a pretty little thing?" He nudged her with a big paw. Lionblaze leaned in and whispered in her ear, "Us orange cats are the best, aren't we?" Sunkit's eyes went wide with awe and bounced up and down.

"I thought the same thing!" She squealed. Lionblaze's whiskers twitched with amusement.

Sitting down, he went right to the names, pointing out cats from different directions. "That's Leafpool, Squirrelflight's sister and my real mother. I assume you met her, she's always on guard." He gestured to the brown tabby who was greeting Lighteningice and her two kits. I wondered what he meant by "real mother".

"Do you have siblings?" I asked and he shook his head. His bright gaze clouded with pain. I instantly regretted mentioning it. Lionblaze sighed. "Jayfeather gave us the prophecy that saved most of us, but couldn't survive since he was blind. Hollyleaf died in battle before this happened." He explained.

I nodded as he continued. "Rowanclaw's son Flametail died before this, Dawnpelt died a few days ago on guard, but Tigerheart is still here. He's the one with the grey she-cat, Dovewing." Lionblaze mewed. "Ivypool is out hunting with Nightcloud, Boulderpaw, and Mintfur. That's Rushpaw, she's the one sleeping by our last medicine cat, Mothwing." It was almost overwhelming with all the cats. I wanted to ask if he had a mate, but I figured she had died as well.

"Who else had survived? I mean the ones who left?" I murmured.

He glanced down at me. "Onestar took most of what was left of WindClan with him. Breezepelt, my step-brother and Crowfeather's son, left along with Sunstrike and Owlwhisker, then there were the two ShadowClan cats, Snowbird and Tawnypelt. Tawnypelt was Tigerheart's mother and Bramblestar's sister..." He explained.

"What about RiverClan cats and ThunderClan?" I whispered, suddenly scared. I could see he was tensed up.

"Sorreltail turned into a flesh-eater over night, no one knows how or why. She ate Daisy and Poppyfrost and her own kits, Lilykit and Seedkit. Cinderheart-" He cringed as he said her name. He must've been close to her. Through clenched teeth, he went on, "-also turned. RiverClan's medicine cat tried to heal a few cats, but they kept puking up blood and eventually ate her. And that's how it all began. Blackstar almost cast ThunderClan and RiverClan away because of it. I can tell someone in ShadowClan turned because ShadowClan is a ghost-Clan just as much as ThunderClan." Lionblaze sighed.

I didn't reply, just nodded. By then, Sunkit had already ran off to fight with Stormkit who still had Leafpool gazing over Lighteningice's kits. She looked upon Lighteningice's kits as if she had never met her own. *Why doesn't she go see Lionblaze? I'm curious at why they don't talk... I have to find out sometime...*

"Really, though. You and the others are in good paws." Lionblaze finished, and with that, he stood up and padded off.

Chapter 29 - Unknown Cat's P.O.V.

From a distance, you'd never know I was there. Prowling deep in the shadows, I have watched them suffer, almost drown, and have many close calls. I have seen it all.

Poor, poor ThunderClan and their other scattered Clans. They should've never let them in. I'm going to kill them all, one by one. Every last one of them. Blackstar and the other weak leaders won't know what hit them.

I had been keeping a close eye on every single cat; studying each and every one of them. I know how these foreign Clan cats talk, how they hunt, how they fight. They were all so vulnerable.

As I kill them off, I won't leave it obvious that a live cat had done the deed. I'd leave my trademark as a bite like a flesh-eater. *These foolish cats won't know what hit them...*

I'd wanted the *true* power, the power I almost grasped... the power that was so close I could almost taste it. Until I let my evil seep out just a little too much... *But what about your remaining kin?* The little voice in my head asked. *Good question...* I narrowed my eyes in thought. He's so young, he wouldn't know the evil I had done! He'd just be happy to see his lost father... He would follow in my paw steps and rule the forest with me...

My thoughts wandered. Wouldn't it be a shame if one cat from each Clan was left? Sunkit would be the last of DarkClan, the shy yet determined one. Poppyheart is the last of SpiritClan, the smart and sneaky one. Squirreltail was going to be the final one for LightClan, the beautiful yet deadly one, but her injury made it impossible for it to happen... I decided Mudpaw would be the last remaining cat from LightClan, the obsessive yet energetic one.

I gazed among the four foreign Clans. Nightcloud will be the last cat

from WindClan, the untrustworthy and mysterious one. Dovewing, from ThunderClan, is the gentle one, but can be fierce. Mintfur is going to be the last of RiverClan because of her strong self. She puts herself out there and tries to be better for her Clan. Tigerheart will be the last of ShadowClan since he is a rule-breaker, a sucker for love and very strong.

Dovewing and Tigerheart won't be able to keep themselves off of each other, with their love that strong. It radiates off of their pelts like an illness!

Soon, there would be half-Clan cats everywhere and they'd be forced to make up one big Clan. Or they'd just go their separate ways, either way works. *I'll watch from the side and if nothing goes as planned, I'll kill them all.*

It seemed easy, too easy. I liked it like that. I've had it hard all my life and with the luck of their weak bodies and low number of cats, I wasn't going to pass on an opportunity like that!

Death is my only release and it looked like I was going to be sent to the sky. So much death was coming, a great way to be set free.

I slowly let my body sink into the cold, murky water as it lapped around my body from the small waves that formed from the wind. I squinted in the moonlight, trying to focus my eyes on the mingling cats on the island. Rage boiled in my stomach. *Fools! You pitiful fools...*

As a night patrol crossed the fallen tree, I slowly began wadding through the marshy water to avoid any confrontation. Hooking my claws into the soft ground, I pulled myself forward as quiet as a mouse. The familiar sound of Heatherleg's voice echoed over the surface of the water and then different voices, probably from the other Clans. Slithering away, I grasped onto the shore of the island. Even with my black pelt and dark brown eyes, I knew it was too risky to leave the water.

Turning to the moor, I could see small figures staggering around in WindClan's old territory and ThunderClan's, too. Their moans and growls traveled over the water and sent a shiver down my spine. I

wondered if they could actually talk to each other in a language that real-live cats couldn't understand.

Perking my ears up, I listened for any voices or roaming cats. To my relief it seemed that everyone had either gone to sleep or went on a patrol. Lifting myself out of the water, I kept low and stalked to the nearest tree. My pelt clung to my skinny frame and, as the murky water dripped off, puddles formed below me. My paws looked weird, like a dark skeleton swapped paws with mine.

I peeked through the thick branches that made the barrier around the island, my ears flat to my head. I narrowed my eyes and examined the cats.

Most were already already in their nests, sleeping peacefully. Tigerheart and Dovewing were still awake, chatting up a storm that I couldn't catch. Leafpool was settling down beside Squirrelflight, circling until she finally could rest.

My plan is going to work nicely... I decided, a smirk slipping up. *Without a* real *medicine cat to tell prophecies, looks like I can kill whoever I want.* If I had been alone, I would've let out a fit of laughter.

Long, tiring moments passed as I waited for the midnight to come. My tail whipped to and fro with impatience. *Go to sleep Bramblestar. I want to kill.*

Bramblestar was looking to the sky, his eyes looking fatigued and hollow. *If it weren't for my plan, I'd of killed him already!*

A growl crept up my throat and losing the last remaining patience I had, I began stalking around the island to find an opening. At the back it lacked a strong barrier and I jumped over a log with ease.

I wonder how many lives Bramblestar has left... I studied the toms dark tabby pelt and broad shoulders. A long scar stuck out on his shoulder. I flexed my claws into the dirt and bunched up my muscles... Baring my teeth, I prepared to leap.

"Bramblestar! Flesh-eaters are making their way toward the island,

we need help," Thornclaw hissed. I jumped at the sound of the toms voice, but relaxed when I realized they were the only ones awake.

As the muscular leader hurried away with Thornclaw at his side, I hurried into the island until I was in the center. *Who should be my first victim?* I wondered, looking around carefully. Beside the beautiful, yet weakened, Squirreltail lay her last kin. Redfur was curled up in a makeshift nest, snoring softly. I stalked closer, knowing I had a limited time.

I padded over to the red tom and lowered my head to his ear. I unsheathed my sharpened claws and grabbed his chin, twisted it so his neck was exposed, and just as his eyes shot open, I sliced open his throat. I let out a menacing purr as shock and confusion flooded his light amber eyes.

Blood gushed out of the wound like an over-flown river. He gurgled and gasped, blood dripping from his jaws. He unsheathed his claws and tried to swing at me, but he was already weakening. "Shh..." I whispered into his ear, "You won't be the only one, for this is only the beginning."

Chapter 30 - Mudpaw's P.O.V.

As a sudden screech rose through the treetops, I immediately got to my paws. I blinked my eyes open, my vision blurry. The sun was just making its way above the horizon. Glancing around the clearing, I spotted Squirreltail hunched over Redfur, whimpering. I scrambled over to her, my heart beating fast.

"What's wrong?" Every cat gasped, moving toward her. Around her, gasps erupted when they realized why she had screamed. Poppyheart met eyes with me, her gaze flooded with confusion and shock.

I squeezed through the cats surrounding Squirreltail's quivering body. "Great StarClan..." I whispered, looking away. Redfur's red body lay in his blood soaked nest, his eyes still wide open, staring off into the distance. Dark, thick blood had dried at the edges of the slit in his neck. Some still dripped from his mouth and into the puddle of his blood below him.

Poppyheart tried to nudge the she-cat away from the last of her kin, but she refused to budge. A growl crept up Squirreltail's throat so the medicine cat backed away.

"Who did this?" Murmurs surrounded the scene. "What a great way to be welcomed." I heard Heatherleg mutter behind me. "Who would have done such a thing? I bet it was one of your cats!" Lilypatch snapped, turning tail to stare at the baffled leaders. They each exchanged sorrowful glances.

I cleared my throat in an attempt to shut them up, but no one seemed to hear me. Bramblestar, Blackstar, and Mistystar shoved their way past Lilypatch and narrowed their eyes at the toms stiff body. Fur pricked up along their spine, they ordered Thornclaw and Rowanclaw to take him out to be buried. Squirreltail hissed at the two toms as they approached her. "I can do it by myself! Your Clans cannot be trusted! I knew this was a bad idea to stay here..." She glared at Lilypatch and suddenly the LightClan she-cat's rage faded

to guilt. She looked to her paws as Squirreltail grabbed her brother by the scruff and began dragging him away.

Bramblestar nodded to the two toms. Thornclaw and Rowanclaw continued to follow the she-cat. I shook my head.

"What in StarClan's name is going on here?" Blackstar snapped, glancing over his broad shoulders at the two leaders. Bramblestar and Mistystar exchanged glances and shrugged. "I let these newcomers in and already we have a tragedy!" The huge white tom muttered.

"Lilypatch," Mistystar called to the grey deputy. The deputy looked over at them. "has there ever been a murderer in any of your Clans?" She asked with her head tipped to the side. Lilypatch padded over to the three leaders, gathered among the blood stain left from Redfur's neck.

Lilypatch stopped in front of them and shook her head, replying with a grim look, "Any killer we had, we exiled or was killed. We only ever had a few killers. Our Clans were well behaved,"

The three leaders nodded and muttered things to themselves. They looked unconvinced.

"We need to stop talking and find that killer! Redfur could just be the first on their list. We could all be in danger!" Lighteningice growled with the four kits safely behind her fluffy tail. Each of them cowered into her stomach.

I nodded to the queen. "She is right. We have no time to waste." The remaining cats of our Clans gave each other sympathetic looks and then everyone froze as the sound of growling and splashing came from outside of the islands barriers. My pelt bristled up as terror washed over me.

Squirrelflight burst through the entrance with the two warriors at her heels, her eyes huge and filled with trauma. "The screams attracted more flesh-eaters! There's too many! We need as much help as we can get!" She pleaded.

I gulped and rushed out of the clearing and over the huge fallen tree. I halted at the edge of the tree-bridge and hesitated jumping down.

Flesh-eaters from all around were stumbling into the water, wading their way through the marsh and climbing onto the smaller island. "What do we do?!" Heatherleg whimpered behind me. The light grey she-cat - Mint something - was attacking two flesh-eaters at once. Nightcloud and Lionblaze were pushing several flesh-eaters back into the water, only to be met by more as they climbed up.

I grabbed a stick on the ground and quickly used my teeth to sharpen it to a point. I held the stick at the center firmly in my jaws and ran at a flesh-eater that Mint was trying to kill. I stabbed it in the temple and immediately it dropped to the ground. Putting my paw to its soft skull, I pulled the stick free and turned to the she-cat.

Mint's eyes widened and her gaze shot over to me. She gasped and dipped her head, "Oh thank you, thank you!" I dipped my head to her and charged full-force at a flesh-eater as it came up onto the island. It dropped dead as soon as the stick impacted its brain. I smiled at how easy this was becoming. *Redfur was right; the longer the infected roam, the more they rot...*

I shook my head. I had to focus! *One mistake and it's all over.* I reminded myself, forcing myself to be as serious and careful as possible. The feeling of eyes staring into my back made me go harder. Pressure made me work harder and faster, I had only then realized it. Around me, Lilypatch was doing the same thing as I was. Heatherleg was fighting beside Nightcloud while Lionblaze was pushing them back. Squirreltail and Squirrelflight worked together to beat two flesh-eaters. The three leaders also had come out and were doing their best to kill as many as they could.

Flesh-eater after flesh-eater, they slowly stopped coming. Slowly and surely, the battling cats were victorious. I gulped for air and sat down, dropping the stained stick. Dead flesh-eaters lay on the blood stained grass and were floating in the marsh, blood clouding around their heads. "Mudpaw..." Squirreltail muttered, limping toward me. I looked up, my eyes heavy. Panting, I dipped my head to her.

"That was awesome!" Boulderpaw gasped, rushing toward me. I nodded and let out a few wheezy coughs. I didn't feel like answering. "What a great idea!" Tigerheart growled to Crowfeather, nudging him in the shoulder. The sleek tom nodded, his eyes narrowed and staring blankly at me.

"Everyone, start pulling the infected out of the water before they pollute the lake!" Mistystar warned. Cats hurried to the marsh and started to pull them from the water.

Tigerheart and Boulderpaw turned to face me again as I added, "We need to add something to the stick to do more damage... Like a sharp rock. It would be so much easier to kill with." The three leaders came toward me, Mistystar's eyes bright and the other two were grave. They nodded, "Good idea." Bramblestar murmured. His eyes were hard and serious.

"Actually," Blackstar started, "his idea is brilliant. These cats may be new, but I can tell StarClan brought you to us for a reason." I gave my chest a few embarrassed licks and shrugged.

Boulderpaw nodded, looking up at the three leaders and then back at me in awe.

"Good fighting. For a 'paw, you sure are intelligent." Lionblaze praised me. I dipped my head in thanks and straightened my posture. Suddenly many cats were surrounding me.

If Reedstar was here... He'd of killed me by now... After all, this 'great idea' was from the most selfish leader of them all. But he doesn't matter anymore. He's dead and gone.

Lilypatch came toward me, a smirk across her distraught face, as the cats padded away. "You're secret's safe with me," She whispered in my ear. Winking to me, she padded off.

Chapter 31 - Lilypatch's P.O.V.

The fact that Mudpaw used Reedstar's idea didn't anger me in the least. He earned the credit and attention while Reedstar deserved his name to never be spoken again. That selfish featherbrain was gone, to never be thought of or seen again...

"Mudpaw, since you bravely fought off the undead, I will kindly ask you to go eat and rest in camp. We will take care of the bodies," Mistystar meowed to the brown apprentice, gesturing with her thick grey tail to the island. He dipped his head and left the sharpened, blood-stained stick on the ground. He hurried to the tree, hopped onto it, and disappearing into camp without a word.

"There is no doubt about it, leaving their bodies to dissolve in the lake will poison us." Blackstar muttered to the other two leaders.

Mistystar dipped her head and sat down with a sigh. There were more bodies than we could even count scattered along the ground and floating in the marsh. The ground I stood on was pooled with blood, and I wondered if the rain would ever be able to wash away the crimson stains.

"Then where are we going to put these... *things*?" Bramblestar hissed, looking over his shoulder. The brown tabby leader glared at the bodies through narrowed eyes. His tail lashed from side to side and I watched him flex his claws into the soil. The leaders exchanged looks with each other then looked to me.

I swallowed nervously and raised my chin. "The water could already be polluted with the infected blood... We should collect as much water from the river until it rains, and then the clouds will do the work for us. I'd imagine Twolegplace would have something solid and hollow to collect it in." I suggested, glancing from one leader to the other.

Behind them, Nightcloud and Mintfur pushed the waterlogged bodies out of the marsh and let them lay on the shore. The leaders

looked considered it, their heads bowed together in conversation. Every now and again they would peek over at me. My shoulder fur threatened to spike up, unsure of what they were saying.

Mistystar let out a purr. "Why are these cats so much smarter?" She padded away from the other leaders and stood beside me. The two tom leaders didn't seem at all amused, giving her a serious, hard stare. After a long time of just piercing silence, Blackstar finally broke the silence.

"We'll go with your idea, Lilypatch. I'll have to admit, I'm almost jealous of your Clans' intelligence, but what's the sense in being jealous when we have your group with us now?" Blackstar stated, chin raised. He trotted over to me and suddenly I felt like a small kit. He practically towered over me, his eyes hollow and blank. The ShadowClan leader continued, "We will leave now, since the sun is just rising."

Turning to Bramblestar and Mistystar, he flicked his ear and mewed, "You two stay here and send patrols out and keep everything normal. Don't let the warriors touch the dead anymore, please. And Lilypatch-" He turned back toward me, ordering, "grab Lionblaze, Tigerheart, Nightcloud, and Heatherleg. She has to let Sunkit grow up before she is fully attached to her."

At the sound of her name, Nightcloud waded through the marsh to stand beside me. I nodded to Blackstar and rushed away, dodging the bodies that were scattered along the ground. Flies buzzed around them as they began to decay rapidly. Jumping up onto the tree-bridge, I scampered across and hopped down.

"Heatherleg, Lionblaze, Tigerheart! You have to come with Blackstar and I to Twolegplace!" I called as I entered the cleared. They raised their heads from their friends, interrupting their meals, and said their farewells to the cats they were with.

None of the three I had called upon had argued, only padded toward me and then past me. My stomach growled for fresh-kill but right then and there, I couldn't of cared less about eating. We had to get water before nightfall.

Sunkit rushed over to the log, following Heatherleg. It was obvious Heatherleg was trying hard not to look behind her. "Wait! I'm coming!" Sunkit called, clawing at the huge tree-bridge. I put my paw in front of her chest, stopping her. She peeked over my leg and tried to maneuver around it. "Move!" She whined.

"Sunkit," I murmured, lowering my head to her golden, small head, "Heatherleg has to leave to do important duties. She'll be back, don't you worry. You stay here with Sootkit and Stormkit, you'll have fun. Soon you will be able to do the same things she does!" I reassured.

She hesitated for a while and opened her mouth to protest, but before she could, Lighteningice came over and grabbed her tiny scruff. Sunkit's eyes didn't leave the tree-bridge, letting out a whimper.

Dipping my head, I rushed over the tree-bridge and ran toward the graveyard. Then it hit me. *Graveyard... Couldn't we just... Bury the dead?*

"Why don't we just bury the dead?" I called to the waiting cats as I leaped off of the tree-bridge.

Mistystar glanced over to me. "I was thinking that as well, but then I thought, what if the blood infected the ground and seeped into the water? We don't quite know how close the water is to the ground below, so either way if we get the Twoleg stuff and fill it with water, we don't have to worry." She replied with a warm stare. I nodded, *Good thinking...*

"Alright, keep everyone away from the marsh and this island. We'll be back - hopefully - by nightfall, maybe midnight if we have troubles finding something we can use." Blackstar meowed over his shoulder. Following in beside Nightcloud, her fur black as night and her eyes hard and serious, I thought, *Good choice in name, it explains her well.* I glanced at her out of the corner of my eye.

I focused forward, padding off of the smaller island and into the marsh water. It surrounded me, making my pelt cling to my scrawny shape. We wadded out of the water in the marsh, heading

east toward the huge Twolegplace. I looked to the sky to see dark clouds moving in. Rain on its way and for once, I was looking forward to it.

We finally stepped out of the mucky waters and trotted toward the fence where a rotting horse lay. The six of us went to a part in the fence where it was broken and smashed, splintering wood jutting out.

Hopping over it, the rest of them waited in silence for me to come. I dipped my head and we were on our way.

Inside of the fence, I would usually feel safer, but the feeling of someone watching me made alarm spark through my body. Moaning came from outside of the fence, but none of them had their blind eyes gazing at me or the group.

Blowing it off, I tried to focus on the other fence. I ducked under it easily and waited patiently for Lionblaze and Heatherleg to come through. I dashed in sudden fear as the sound of a loud growl frightened me. From where I ducked into the fence, I could see a barn straight on. I had completely forgotten about the huge growl as I jumped the fence again to get to the entrance.

The huge wooden door had been broken down as if a horse had kicked it down and trampled it in fear. I wondered if it was the one laying down decaying. I shrugged off that thought too, and focused harder on the inside of the Twolegnest. I waited for everyone to come in behind me before I went in.

"I thought there was a second horse?" Tigerheart murmured to Lionblaze. The orange warrior shrugged and leaned in to whisper something I didn't catch.

"Alright. Nightcloud, stay back here and yell if anything comes or suddenly attacks you. We're going to search for anything to put water in." Blackstar informed the black, silent warrior. She dipped her head and plopped down without a word.

Lionblaze, Heatherleg, Tigerheart, and I followed Blackstar until he halted just below a wooden plank that was above us, held by pillars

that were almost as wide as two cats combined.

"Split up. Lionblaze, Tigerheart, stay together. Heatherleg, Lilypatch, stick together. I'll be looking above, Lionblaze, look around inside and Lilypatch go outside around the barn," Blackstar ordered, eyes narrowed, "Meet here if you see anything useful, yell if you get attacked or see a flesh-eater and if you find nothing by nightfall, come back here." Blackstar drew a X in the dirt ground and dipped his head before trotting off.

I turned tail and trekked toward the entrance again, Heatherleg at my heels.

"I hope we find something useful..." Heatherleg sighed. I nodded, *Me too... Me too.*

Chapter 32 - Heatherleg's P.O.V.

[image]

I padded along with Lilypatch out of the broken entrance and into the darkening sky. The clouds were moving in quickly as the wind was picking up speed. My fur was blown the opposite way as we headed down the barn, in between the fence.

My claws were unsheathed, tearing up the dead grass and dirt. I was prepared for anything to pop out with their jaws gaping wide... Moaning came from inside of the fence and I forced myself not to look. A gurgling sound came after each moan, almost sounding like someone was choking on blood. I swallowed as my stomach churned.

"I think that still cat's alive!" Lilypatch halted, her ears perked. She peeked through the gaps in the fence, her fur bristling. I followed her gaze to see a cat stumbling toward us. It's eyes weren't clouded over like the rest of the infected, instead they were bloodshot and yellow. "Hewp... me..." It stammered, blood dripping from its jaws.

Gulping, I forced myself to head toward our destination. "We should keep moving, he won't survive." I muttered, keeping my head down.

"Don't you think the cat would already be dead? Look at the bite wound! It's already scabbed over." Lilypatch insisted. She was still in the same spot. As she glanced over at me, I narrowed my eyes at her. "We should bring him to Poppyheart and Red-" She trailed off, looking to her paws and letting out a sigh.

How could she forget such a terrible thing? I wondered. Pushing the thought of cuffing her ears to the back of my mind, I hurried along. "Come on! They're expecting us to find something useful!" I growled, lashing my tail.

Lilypatch continued to talk about the dying tom as we trotted to the

back of the barn. "Poppyheart might be able to experiment on him. Should we bring him back?" She suggested as she caught up with me and I didn't reply. Through the corner of my eye I watched her glance back at the whimpering tom several times. Neither of us spoke as we came to the back corner of the barn. Peeking around, I recoiled at the smell wafting from a hollow, grey Twoleg-thing on its sidebeside the bright red wall. A foul smelling sludge had formed a puddle around the dented object. Flies buzzed around the sludge and for a moment, I wondered if it was worth it to clean it out.

"This is what we need. It has a handle and everything!" Lilypatch exclaimed.

I flicked my ear and tried to push it with a paw. The sludge was hardened and almost acted like sap from a tree, keeping it from moving easily. "We'll have to clean it out really good. You never know what those ugly Twolegs could have been up to..."

"Omeone... pwease hewp m-me..." The cat let out a moan from behind the fence. It sounded as if he had no tongue. I jerked my muzzle over my shoulder and I spotted the torn up cat. His gaze locked onto mine for a few heartbeats, sending a shiver down my spine. I swallowed again and turned toward Lilypatch. I finally answered Lilypatch's suggestion, "Maybe we should take him back to camp. He seems stable and he isn't trying to eat us..."

Lilypatch's eyes lit up and she dipped her head. "Grab the hollow thing, I'll talk to the half-infected." Lilypatch murmured near my ear. I nodded and pushed it onto the open side. By hitting the sides I managed to get most of the gunk out. After tipping it back over, I grabbed the thin handle and began dragging it toward Lilypatch. The stink was still there, making my eyes water.

Lilypatch ducked under the fence and began stalking toward the half-infected. I let the hollow object sit on its base as I watched intently. He was panting and swallowed continuously. His eyes were flooded with dread and pain. *If he can still feel emotions and pain, I think we might be able to save him!*

"Come with us, we can help you!" Lilypatch soothed. Her fur was spiking up and her tail trembled. Lilypatch nudged the torn up cat

toward the fence she had ducked under. The tom opened his mouth to speak, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. I noticed with a jolt that he really *didn't* have a tongue; half of it was gone! "We're going to take you to our medicine cat. It isn't too far from here." Lilypatch meowed softly, her eyes wide and kind.

The bloody cat nodded and followed in beside Lilypatch at the fences edge. We got to the entrance and Nightcloud stood up, alarmed. "Are you *insane*? Get that infected featherbrain out of here!" She snarled, fur spiked up along her spine as she unsheathed her claws.

I shook my head, "We think he's only partly infected. He can feel pain!" Nightcloud ignored my statement and growled at the half-infected tom. She stood in the way of the barn entrance.

"Heatherleg, take the pale inside. You two-" Nightcloud ordered, then turned to Lilypatch and the unknown cat. "will be staying here." She growled. *Pale?* I wondered. I rolled my eyes. *She was better when she was silent.* I thought as I trotted into the barn. As it turned out, Blackstar was waiting for in the center of the barn for our return. He nodded to me. "There you are. Good, I found one as well." Blackstar meowed, gesturing with his white tail to the hollow object. *Or pale, whatever it's called.*

I dipped my head. "It will need to be cleaned out, but it still holds water." Dropping the pale next to his, I shuffled my paws. *How will I ask?*

"Blackstar..." I began slowly, "Lilypatch and I found an injured cat... Could we help him?" I asked. *That wasn't what I meant... He's going to think just an injury! He's going to be furious...* He narrowed his eyes, standing up. "Once I confirm he isn't bitten then-" Blackstar meowed, starting to pad toward the entrance.

I interrupted him before he could leave, "Actually, what I meant was that he is *half*-infected. I think we should get Poppyheart and Mothwing to use any herbs they can find to try and cure him. If it won't work, then... we can kill him." I meowed, cowering down to the ground as he took a step toward me.

"Why in StarClan's name would I let him into the camp, let alone risk our last medicine cat and your last medicine cat for that? I know for a fact that this is mouse-brained!" Blackstar snapped, glaring down on me. He turned to leave again.

I hurried after him, pleading, "Please, he can still feel pain and he understands what we say! We could cure him, Blackstar. I know it's a slim chance but-" I could hear a growl creeping up his throat, but he kept his anger to a minimum. "Fine, but he is to stay outside of camp at all times." Blackstar hissed through clenched teeth.

I dipped my head and rushed passed the huge tom, out of the barn. I heard Blackstar padding out with Tigerheart and Lionblaze. Halting outside of the barn, I saw Nightcloud sitting by the wall, eyes glued to the unknown half-infected cat.

"We're leaving." Blackstar announced, taking the lead as he leaped over the fence. Tigerheart and Lionblaze were carrying the pales. They had to keep their heads strained to keep the pales off of their paws since they were as tall and wide as them.

I felt raindrops start hitting my pelt softly as we began to trek back to the island. Though as we left the Twolegplace, the rain was coming down faster and harder. I could hear the raindrops hitting the inside of the two pales, and soon it seemed it was already filling.

"It 'ings..." The cat murmured, his eyes round with worry. *He meant 'it stings' right?* I wondered. Without his tongue, it must've been terribly hard for him to talk. The blood and dirt that was on his pelt from the wounds were washing away. I couldn't imagine being torn open and then dragging yourself toward others.

"What? It stings?" I asked and he nodded.

"We'll get some herbs for your wounds," I whispered. He smelt like crow-food, as if the mouths of the flesh-eaters stained him with their stench.

Chapter 33 - Squirreltail's P.O.V.

The rain had started off softly, but as we waited for Blackstar to come back, it started to come down heavier and faster. It was as if someone was dancing on the clouds and making it rain. *Could it be you, Redfur?* I speculated, squinting as I took a peek at the dark sky.

A ball of emotion sat in my throat and as much as I swallowed, it just would not go away. *Why did such a thing have to happen? My only remaining kin... Did you need him, StarClan?* I sighed and kneaded my claws into the wet bark.

It was devastating to know he was beside me the whole time. How could I have slept through such a thing? *Did he even suffer? He was right beside me... How did I not hear him or feel him struggling?*

As I sat on the tree-bridge, I suddenly heard the sound of something striding through the water. My heart lurched. Was it Redfur's killer? I stood up and quickly realized the group of cats padding toward me was only Blackstar's patrol.

My fur bristled as I spotted a bloody cat beside them. *What in StarClan's name are they thinking?*

The guards stopped them and I rushed over. Forgetting my hind leg was still sore, I leaped off of the tree-bridge and hit the ground with a thump. I cringed as I landed but it faded.

"Why are you bringing in a flesh-eater, Blackstar? Have you gone crazy?" Mintfur gasped, blocking the torn up cats' way. Her lip curled in a snarl.

"We are going to experiment on him. He is to stay here until further notice. Tigerheart, Lionblaze, leave the pales in the open. Lilypatch, stay here with... him. The rest of you, I'm sending you out on a patrol. I'm going to get the medicine cats." Blackstar instructed,

obviously annoyed.

Blackstar drove past me, making me stumble to the side. I glared at him but as rapid as it came, the anger disappeared. *How could I be angry when Blackstar is trying all he can to keep the Clans alive?* I thought to myself. I mentally hit myself for being so selfish and fluffed out my fur. Glancing at the silent tom, I realized he had a bite mark. I narrowed my eyes as he stood with the Clan cats with an intimidated look. *He's not dead?*

Turning to Lilypatch, I hissed, "If he is bitten, why isn't he trying to eat us?" Lilypatch looked up at the tall, torn up, light brown tom and shrugged. "He was asking for help. I don't know if he's immune or what, but I thought we could see if we could save him." She mewed and then looked up at him again. "What's your name anyway?" Lilypatch asked.

The tom opened his mouth and I practically gagged at the sight of his missing tongue. Half of it was gone, as if it had been bitten off. His eyes that were bright yellow were red around them. I couldn't understand why, though. A white spot was under his chin with a large patch of white on his chest. His two back paws and fluffy tail were white too.

"B-ud," The tom stammered. *I bet it hurts for him to use his tongue. How has he not bled out yet?* I wondered, tilting my head to the side. "Blood," The half-infected tom corrected himself, cringing as he said the "L".

"Blood, huh? Mothwing and Poppyheart are going to try and... fix you." Lilypatch meowed.

"His name suits his condition," I muttered, looking away. Lilypatch glared at me while Blood just gave me a quick blank look.

After the awkward silence that made me want to scream, Mothwing and Poppyheart finally entered the dead-island, where all the dead flesh-eaters lay, rotting away for the ground to consume. Their mouths were filed with different varieties of herbs, ranging from leaves to roots to nettles.

"Alright... We're going to start by cleaning your wounds up. Then we're going to clean up that tongue somehow..." Poppyheart explained, examining his pelt.

"As for your fur," Mothwing began, coming around from his right side, "it will grow back in time - if you survive this infection. We will work where you got bitten. Where was that?"

Blood mumbled in a hurry, "Aw 'ose wous..." Mothwing and Poppyheart exchanged a glance and I rolled my eyes, *They should put him out of his misery! He's suffering and won't last much longer.*

"I'm sorry, come again?" Mothwing meowed, craning her neck closer. I cringed. *He's going to bite her!* I held my breath as Blood opened his mouth again, looking in her ear, "All those wounds," Blood's jaw twitched as he struggled to talk normally.

"We're going to put you to sleep to work with your wounds. Just take these poppy seeds and you'll be out in moments, unable to feel the pain." Poppyheart soothed, giving the half-infected tom a warm smile. She fed Blood only three tiny black seeds and together, Mothwing and Poppyheart set up the herbs they thought they'd need.

"Plenty of goldenrod, though we may need more cobweb. We do have plenty of horsetail, though, so I think we're good." Poppyheart muttered to Mothwing. The golden she-cat narrowed her eyes in thought. "Mm-hmm... I have a bit of burnet left that we can give him when he wakes, it will keep his strength up from all the bloodloss." Mothwing suggested.

I can't understand a word they're saying... Burnet? Sounds like someone burnt something... Goldenrod? Sounds like a name! Cobweb? That's what spiders live in! It's crazy how these leaves and flowers can be so needed. But Lilypatch just watched as Blood fell asleep, like a mother tending her ill kit.

"Catchweed, do you have any? We may need to use it for the amount of herbs we'll be using." Mothwing asked, using a claw to sift through the herbs. From her pile, Poppyheart narrowed her eyes and grabbed a single leaf filled with green and white burrs. "I do,

indeed."

"He has unbelievably red eyes. Do you think celandine would heal that, or at least soothe it?" Poppyheart muttered as she dropped the green burrs in the pile they were going to be using.

Mothwing gave her a nod. "Of course. It helps any eye-infection!" She purred.

Poppyheart spotted a small white flower and picked it up. "This soothes the mind as well as keeps up strength. This would work better than burnet." Mothwing dipped her head in agreement and looked around with her eyes narrowed.

"He's going to get an infection for sure with those deep wounds. I'll get the marigold and goldenrod ready..." Mothwing mumbled, pushing yellow flowers off on their own. They didn't speak for a few heartbeats, but eventually Mothwing continued, "I'll ask you cats to leave us be while we work on this half-infected cat. I'll get Mistystar and the other leaders to come when we are done." She glanced over her shoulder at the few cats watching them on the dead-island. They padded away and over the tree-bridge. With a final glance at the strange tom, I hurried off beside Lilypatch. She didn't say anything, but her eyes shone with worry.

Did Lilypatch and Heatherleg make the right decision in bringing Blood here or is this yet another mistake?

Chapter 34 - Lighteningice's P.O.V.

Carefully, I slid out of the makeshift nest that Sootkit and Stormkit lay curled up with each other. Ebonykit lay with his chin on the edge of the nest, snoring softly. None of them stirred. Sunkit was still awake, padding around and looking up at the darkening sky. Though she was getting older, it still worried me that no one was paying attention to her.

"Sunkit!" I hissed as I padded toward her. The golden she-kit whipped around to see who had called to her. "You should be settling down. You can sleep in my nest tonight." Sunkit gazed up at me and even though she looked as if she wanted to argue, she sighed and nodded.

Pausing beside the nest, Sunkit frowned. "How come Heatherleg doesn't spend any time with me anymore?" She mewed, her jaw stretching wide in a yawn. Giving the kit a reassuring look, I licked her cheek. "Heatherleg has many duties like the rest of the Clan cats. When she has time to play, I'm sure she will!" I grasped her by the scruff and lifted her into the nest where she plopped down in between my two tom-kits and Ebonykit.

Sunkit opened her mouth to continue and stood up, but I pushed her back down and shook my head, "Heatherleg will be here when you wake. The sun will be down before long and I don't want to hear another peep from you." I ordered softly. Sunkit rolled her eyes but listened. She circled around in the nest and before long, she curled up and tucked her tail over her nose.

The growing kit gave out a tiny sigh as her eyes closed. *Good, I need to grab something to eat before I starve to death!*

I heard a faint snapping sound come from just the trees. My heart began to race. *It could just be a squirrel or a bird. Don't frighten yourself!* Quietly, I sighed and trekked toward the fresh-kill pile.

Just as I began to nose through the mouth-watering prey, the sound of heavy paws hitting the ground made my freeze. The fur along my spine spiked up as fear crept throughout my body. *That didn't sound like a squirrel...*

Bracing myself, I glanced over my should only to realize it was Heatherleg and everyone else that was on the dead-island, including the guards. My heart started to calm.

"You scared me out of my fur!" I panted as Lilypatch lead the way in.

She let out a purr, "Oops, sorry!" Lilypatch hurried in beside me and snatched a fat dove and I narrowed my eyes at her as jealousy washed over me.

"Are you going to finish that?" I asked, tilting my head to the side.

Lilypatch flicked her tail. "I haven't even had a bite yet..." She responded.

I was going to pick that. Annoyance pricked under my pelt, but I fought back the retort. I watched her head off to a spot under the shade of a branch with a grim look on my face.

Turning around, I sniffed through the fresh-kill like again. The only piece that looked good enough to satisfy my hunger was a starling. And with that, I headed off to sit a few tail-lengths away from the nest that the four kits were sleeping in. I crouched down and dug in.

By the time I had finished eating the starling, the moon was up fully. Bright stars were speckling throughout the navy blue sky. *If only there wasn't a thing to worry about... I would have sprawled out and watched the stars blink until I fell asleep.* My heart suddenly ached. *Nothing will ever be okay...*

A sudden mew from the other side of camp made my muzzle snap up. "Lighteningice, I'm going out to hunt with Heatherleg, Dovewing, and Mintfur. We'll be back before dawn." Lilypatch

murmured and at the sound of their names, Dovewing, Mintfur, and Heatherlegs' heads turned toward Lilypatch. None of them protested as Lilypatch explained to the exhausted ShadowClan leader that she was taking out the patrol. I watched silently as Lilypatch lead the way out of camp and into the dying world beyond.

As soon as they left, the camp went quiet. An eerie silence that made me feel less than peaceful. Within moments, I could feel eyes burning through my pelt. Swallowing, I glanced around the camp. None of the warriors were watching me. From beneath the shade of a pine tree, Blackstar fluffed out his fur. Even though most of his Clan and the remainder of our own Clan was asleep, he decided through a yawn, "I'm going to call it a night, everyone. No one is to go onto dead-island, Ivypool I want you to wait on the tree-bridge until Mothwing and Poppyheart are done. Keep an eye on the camp as well as the medicine cats."

Stretching, the large white tom kneaded at a patch of grass until he was comfortable and proceeded to lay. *I have two questions for that leader... Why was his name 'Black' when he is almost completely white? Maybe it was Blacksoul or Blackfoot or Blackear. It would make sense then. But how could he just go to sleep? How could* any *of the leaders go to sleep? A murderer is out on the loose and he put one scrawny she-cat on guard!*

I looked around the camp as everyone settled down. Cats huddled together, quiet mumbles echoing through the island as they shared tongues before they went to sleep. Ivypool trotted away with her ears flat to her head. Hopping onto the tree-bridge lightly, she sat at the entrance with her ears perked. My stomach twisted as my eyes rested on the four tiny bundles. *I have to guard the three kits... I would never forgive myself if they were killed while I slept beside them!*

I sat in the quiet with my tail wrapped around my paws. The wind tugged at my pelt, sending a shiver down my back. The only sounds were the far away groaning from flesh-eaters, the soft snoring coming from a few warriors, and the hushed mumbles of Mothwing and Poppyheart as they discussed something.

A sudden snap echoed from the barrier that lined the camp again. Jolting, I nearly jumped out of my skin. My heart began to beat fast

and I found myself scanning beyond the barrier. As far as I could tell, there was nothing. Instincts told me to turned around to see if something was behind me, but there was nothing.

I gulped. *Something isn't right...* Out of the blue, the wind stopped and everything stood still. A sudden sharp pain pulsed through me as I felt my neck slice open. I let out a yelp, jumping in front of the kits. Blood dripped to the ground, a warm liquid seeping through my white pelt. My stomach churned with dread.

My gaze traveled to the side. A dark tom with black eyes stood crouched down beside me, a smirk spread across his menacing face. His yellow teeth glinted in the moonlight. The toms claws were unsheathed, ready to strike.

He stood up straight and I realized the little weasel was almost double my size. I opened my mouth to scream, but he clamped my mouth shut. He unsheathed his claws again and shoved his long, thorn-like claws into the wound. A muffled sound of my scream came as my sight went fuzzy and my mind went blank except for one thing that left a pang into my heart as I gave my last breath: *My kits... I was supposed to protect my kits...*

Without realizing it, I had collapsed to my side. Through my darkening eyes, I helplessly watched the tom grab Ebonykit and hurry off out of the camp.

Chapter 35 - Poppyheart's P.O.V.

Am I missing anyone? I deleted the names of the current gorup of cats by mistake! D:

Mudpaw, Ebonykit, Sootkit, Stormkit, Sunkit, Heatherleg, Lilypatch, Squirreltail, Poppyheart --- Dovewing, Tigerheart, Ivypool, Mothwing, Rushpaw, Blazefang, Blackstar, Bramblestar, Mistystar, Crowfeather, Squirrelflight, Nightcloud, Lionblaze, Mintfur, Rowanclaw, Leafpool... Anyone else??

Let me know if you noticed someone is missing!

We dressed the half-infected toms wounds until the moon was already making its way down the sky. Surprisingly, the tom didn't wake up as we had dabbed the open gashes with herbs and wrapped them with cobweb. Occasionally he would moan in his sleep, but nothing more. Mothwing and I had used twice as many poppy seeds to keep him asleep since the first three didn't do a thing.

"We need to wake him up. Bramblestar will want to come speak to him and he usually wakes just before dawn." Mothwing meowed with a glance outside of the make-shift den that Lilypatch, Lionblaze and Nightcloud had made for the injured tom.

I nudged the toms shoulder gently; by then the effects of the seeds should have begun to wear off. The tom didn't budge until I prodded at his shoulder again. My heart began to race as his lip twitched, and then his front paw. "I think... He might be turning," I gasped, backing away.

Mothwing's head snapped to the tom with a stern look deep in her amber gaze. "And to think, I wasted so many good herbs on him! I

knew this would be a waste." She snarled, her fur standing on end.

But only a couple of heartbeats went by before the injured tom blinked open his eyes and glanced around at his surroundings. I noticed his eyes were still bloodshot and yellow as he looked to Mothwing and then me. I could feel the tense atmosphere fade to relief as we realized the tom was still alive. With a quick glance to each other, Mothwing dipped her head and sighed, "I'll apply the celandine to his eyes. Maybe it will calm down the redness." Taking in a deep breath, I noticed the tom's scent stank of rotting crow-food. Trying not to wrinkle my nose, I felt my shoulder fur bristle. My instincts screamed for me to run away from the creepy tom, but I knew he needed our help.

"I guess it wasn't a waste of our time and herbs after all..." I murmured half to myself. Mothwing grasped the only remaining celandine flower by its stem and as the tom opened his bloodshot eyes wide, she squeezed the juice into his eyes.

He blinked quickly as the juice dripped into each of his eyes and shook his head in pain. "Very good," Mothwing muttered with her eyes narrowed in thought. "Now about your tongue..." The tom opened his mouth and looked blankly at us.

Padding up to the tom as he sat up, I glanced into his mouth. His tongue wasn't bleeding but it was crusting over and swollen. *It's beginning to get infected...* I thought to myself. "I will try trickling some chervil juices onto the part where his tongue is missing. I have some left. It should help cure the infection that's beginning." I meowed softly then turned to the tom, "You... smell like death. Rosemary and mint will help hide it until hopefully the smell goes away."

Mothwing approved my statement by nodding. The tom just stared back at us. "Do you have any pains?" She asked, cocking her head to the side. He nodded and pointed to his dressed wounds with his nose. *I bet they sting, they're so deep you can almost see bone. But wouldn't they be numbed? He looks and smells half-dead...*

As she picked out a dandelion and handed it to the tom, I scratched through my small stash of herbs until I found the last bit of chervil.

"Chew it thoroughly. It acts as a painkiller." The half-infected tom obeyed and grabbed it with his mouth. He cringed as he began to chew, but kept going nonetheless. I watched him swallow, squeezing his eyes shut, as I brought the chervil toward him.

Setting down the herbs, I asked, "What *is* your name anyway? Where did you live before this happened?"

"Let the painkiller settle in before you ask questions. The poor thing will die of pain from that tongue of his." Mothwing hissed to me. The tom stared blankly at me and replied, with pain glinting in his bloodshot eyes, "B-lood."

While I tipped my head with confusion, Mothwing gave him a confident nod and mewed, "Blood, huh?" Blood cringed but nodded in agreement. Dipping my head, I grabbed the herbs again, "Well, Blood, let's get the worst part over with."

With his eyes dull from pain, Blood opened his mouth and stuck his tongue out as far as he could. He winced from the effort and then tore at the dirt below him as the juice made contact with his tongue. After the remaining juice was squeezed out of the leaves, Blood clenched his jaws together.

"I think we've done as much as we can. I'm hungry and tired, and if I lose anymore sleep I'm going to grow into a badger!" I purred as I swept the chervil off the side. The golden furred she-cat dipped her head. "We will bring back another cat to watch over you for the night," She told the tom and padded away after he nodded.

"You can go to sleep. Whoever is on guard, I'll tell them to come and guard him. I'd rather watch the camp than a half-infected cat..." Mothwing scoffed. I dipped my head and made my way toward the tree-bridge with the other medicine cat at my side. My muscles were stiff and my head was fuzzy with fatigue as we crossed the tree trunk.

A chilly breeze ruffled my fur, sending shivers down my back. It seemed to get stronger with every step I took toward the camp. As we approached the grey-and-white tabby she-cat, her ears pricked up. I dipped my head to her as we stopped in front of her. "Ivypool,

could you watch dead-island? The half-infected tom, who we discovered is named Blood, needs to be guarded and Poppyheart and I haven't eaten today. I'll keep watch here when I'm finished and I'll call for you if I see anything suspicious," Mothwing uttered.

Ivypool only blinked, standing up with an emotionless expression and strode across the tree as silent as a mouse. Mothwing rolled her eyes before hurrying off to the pitiful fresh-kill pile. Following behind her, I slowed down to a halt at the center of the clearing. There was something wrong. No cat was awake yet, but I quickly noticed the scent of death lingering through the island. My shoulder fur bristled up. Scanning the cats curled up in their nests, I thought, *Maybe Blood's scent blew into the camp with the strong wind...*

Every cat seemed to be sleeping peacefully. Mudpaw and Eclipse snored softly, while Blackstar and Lionblaze let out hefty snorts every now and again. The only thing that stood out to me was that Lighteningice wasn't facing her kits. With her constant protective and anxious attitude, she always curled herself around her kits, including the other two kits, and never rolled over.

Lighteningice was curled up with her back facing the four sleeping kits and as I padded closer to make sure she was okay, I instantly got an overwhelming whiff of death. My stomach turned and immediately I forgot how hungry I was. With curiosity prickling through my pelt, I couldn't help but bend over the pure white queen to see her face. Shock pulsed through me as I stared into her wide open, misty gaze. Blood had streamed from the large cut in her throat and had formed a pool at the edge of the nest. Sniffing the scene, I realized the blood was fresh. Lighteningice's body may have begun to stiffen, but it was still warm.

I swallowed and backed away, letting out a whimper. "Oh StarClan, no..." In the corner of my eye, I watched Mothwing pad in beside me. She let out a gasp as she, too, faced the dead queen.

As Lighteningice's two kits squirmed in their sleep with the two other motherless kits, I wondered with a sharp pang in my heart, *What will her kits do without her? Another two innocent kits are going to grow up without a mother... Who will take care of them now? More importantly... How long until she turns?*

Chapter 36 - Lilypatch's P.O.V.

We entered camp just as the dawn light was beginning to filter through the trees and cascade over the ground. Birds chattered all around us and for a split heartbeat, it felt like there was nothing to worry about. Frost decorated the dying grass and the stems of the wilting flowers. A stiff breeze blew through the patrol, one that sent shivers down my back. As I breathed in and out, puffs of white clouds came out of my nostrils. *Leaf-bare is coming... Much quicker than I had expected, too*.

As I led my patrol into the first island, I could sense tension as heavy as a cloud ready to burst with rain. I exchanged a glance with Mudpaw, but he didn't seem to notice the same feeling. Each of us had at least one freshly killed prey in our mouths. I held a sparrow while the others either had mice or squirrels. There were few species we could find, even as we ventured out of the usual territory.

Crossing the tree-bridge quickly, I hurried into camp to drop my prey. Many cats had their heads bowed and very few were actually talking. Only the leaders were murmuring to themselves, an occasional glance at our small remaining group every few heartbeats. "What's going on?" I called to Poppyheart as I headed her way. Her shoulders were sticking out as her head hung, watching her paws as she shuffled them and dug at the solid ground.

Poppyheart sunk her claws into the soil beneath her and let out an exhausted sigh. "Lighteningice... Someone murdered her." She croaked without moving. A familiar pain pulsed in my heart as I glanced around and realized the beautiful white she-cat was no where to be seen. There was a ball of grief stuck in my throat as my eyes wandered over to Stormkit and Sootkit. Sootkit chased after his stronger brother who was holding a feather in his mouth. Neither seemed to realize that their mother was dead.

When is this sorrow going to end? It's like we're still stuck in this loop of

confusion and despair with, seemingly, no way out...

Poppyheart lifted her heavy gaze and followed mine to where the two kits played. "No one knew how to break it to them, so we said she was out for a walk..." She whispered.

Shaking my head, I glanced around at the warriors. The Clans that had taken us in were on one side of the island, while our small group huddled on the other. "We need to find this murderer before they kill more of us. I am not going to let my warriors get killed anymore! This is absolute madness." I exclaimed, unsheathing my claws in rage.

"Who every said we were *your* warriors? I'm still a DarkClan warrior and always will be!" Heatherleg hissed, glaring at me from only a few tail-lengths away. She held Sunkit close with her tail.

Shaking my head, I scoffed, "That's not the point, Heatherleg! You know what I'm trying to say." My shoulder fur bristled out of embarrassment. I ducked my head and looked to Poppyheart for some kind of reassurance. She kept her eyes fixed on the two brothers as they fought over the feather.

"Oh, I know what you meant. You're turning into Reedstar! Selfish! You can't just claim us, we have the blood of different Clans! If it wasn't for this awful outbreak, we would be home in our own territories right now." Heatherleg snarled. Her fur was standing on end and her lip was curled, showing her glistening teeth. *Why is she acting like this all of a sudden? I didn't mean to "claim" anyone...* My eyes widened as she began to growl at me.

Sunkit backed away from her foster mother and tugged at her leg with her teeth. "Stop it, Heatherleg. Don't be so mean!" She squealed through her skin and fur. All of the cats on the island were looking over. The leaders stopped talking and watched intently through narrowed eyes.

I was astonished, unable to reply. I could only splutter out what was supposed to be the beginning of a sentence. Heatherleg didn't flinch as Sunkit pleaded her to calm down. *Could Heatherleg be...*

Mudpaw let out a hiss as he hurried over to stand in between us. "Knock it off, you two! We were taught to treat each other as equals and Lilypatch is doing just that! I'm sure she didn't mean to offend you." The young tom snapped.

"Mudpaw is right. Enough of the arguing, we don't need these pitiful disturbances!" Blackstar stomped over with his teeth bared in a snarl. Bramblestar strode in beside him, his face blank, and ordered, "We let your group stay here and in return for our kindness, you will help us survive. Which means you need to be peaceful."

"I didn't ask to come here... If Blazefang hadn't of offered us this place, we probably could have found our own home. And if Cloudjaw hadn't of agreed to live with total strangers, then we wouldn't have lost two of our warriors!" Heatherleg sobbed and let herself relax. She seemed frightened now, mumbling herself, "I just want this nightmare to end..."

Poppyheart's gaze shot to Heatherleg, but before she could speak, Mistystar joined in. "And *we* never asked for you to come here. Blazefang offered your group a safe place to stay; it was out of kindness. Whoever is killing your cats isn't on us, it's on *you*." The tall grey leader mewed as she padded in behind the two tom leaders. Her blue gaze was stern as she glanced at Heatherleg and then to me.

Poppyheart's tail whipped from side to side as she stalked toward Heatherleg. "How *dare* you blame Cloudjaw for this? He was only trying to get us somewhere! And he did! I think this place has been the best place we've been to since this curse started!" The medicine cat growled with her eyes narrowed at the tan she-cat.

"Actually, I think Heatherleg is quite right. It seems this place gave you what you needed, both good and bad. You're all getting what you deserve... Blazefang certainly did the wrong thing when he dragged these worthless souls here... You will *all* pay for their mistakes." A strangers voice echoed down menacingly from one of the two trees that hovered above us. It gave me the chills when I heard it. *I know that voice...* It made rage begin to boil up inside of my gut, a feeling I hadn't of felt so intensely for what seemed like

moons... It reminded me of someone so close to home...

Every cat glanced up at the two trees but no one moved. The three leaders exchanged narrowed glances, their fur standing on end. "None of you will survive this, that's a promise." The voice purred, its tone scratchy. But as much as I racked my brain, I just couldn't pin-point any names.

Mudpaw let out a gasp and yowled, "Reedstar!" He raced to one of the trees, but Blackstar held him back with his front paw. My heart lurched. *That can't be... He's dead... Right?*

Chapter 37 - Mudpaw's P.O.V.

This has to be a dream. Reedstar drowned. Squirreltail said he pushed her up out of the water before tumbling downstream... Great StarClan, help us...

"Reedstar?" Mistystar's nose wrinkled up with disgust. "I thought you said he was dead?" The grey leader frowned and stood up, unsheathing her claws as her shoulder fur bristled. Blackstar and Bramblestar exchanged glances; neither of them looked fazed by the intruder.

Heatherleg glanced up at the trees and swept Sunkit closer to her stomach. "That's impossible... You pathetic furball, you're supposed to be dead!" Heatherleg snarled. Stormkit stopped running dead in his tracks and dropped his feather. Sootkit, with his gaze over his shoulder, didn't realize his brother had halted and bumped into him. The thicker kit stumbled but didn't make a retort, only cowered down. Poppyheart hurried over and brought them closer to her. "I want Lighteningice!" Sootkit let out a wail and tried to scamper out of the island. The tortoiseshell medicine cat nosed him back in front of her without a word.

"I'm half-dead, for your information. Did you think that rancid cat on the other island was the only cat who could be half-infected?" Reedstar snorted, jumped down to the branch below. It barely budged under his weight. "You cats really are mouse-brained."

Silence ebbed through the island. "Did you actually think that I *died*? I'm Reedstar, the best, most powerful of them all. I'm a *legend* for StarClan's sake! And legends... well, legends never die." He boasted. Reedstar's eyes glowed from inside of the spindly tree.

"Legend? The only reason you could be labeled as a legend is because of how selfish you are!" Poppyheart snapped, guarding Lighteningice's two kits with a fierce snarl.

The slick tom let out a menacing purr as he walked the branch. "But

I'd still be a legend. Selfish was always planned to be my second name." The moonlight flickered onto his pelt so we could see his body. He was thinner now, a few gashes here and there. White puss lined the deep wounds. *He really* is *half infected...*

Mintfur let out a yowl. "Enough of this, kill that stupid tom before he infects us!" She spat. Many of the other Clan cats let out sneers of approval.

"Oh, it isn't me you have to worry about," Reedstar sighed, laying down on the branch with a glistening smile covered his face. Crossing his paws neatly one over the other, his sharp gaze drifted to the entrance to the island. "My infection won't be the cause of your slow deaths, someone else's will."

"Blood..." Mothwing muttered, glancing over at Poppyheart. *Is that the half-infected tom's name?*

I gulped and the only thing that could come to my mind, too, was the half-infected cat. Cats glanced at each other, and each of them unsheathed their claws. Sootkit let out a muffled whimper from Poppyheart's belly while Stormkit unsheathed his tiny claws, preparing for whatever Reedstar was talking about. As Blackstar opened his mouth to confront Reedstar, Blood suddenly came rushing into camp with Rowanclaw at his tail. Their eyes were wide with horror, Blood's tail shivering and his fur on end.

"Infected... They're coming!" Rowanclaw gasped. A distant groaning sound bounced off of the lake and entered the island in waves. Ebonykit lay in between the two different Clan-groups, his body quivering. No one seemed to pay attention to him. Squirreltail met eyes with me and caught sight of Ebonykit, curled up on his own.The snarls grew closer and before I could hurry after Ebonykit, Squirreltail began to wobble over. Her ankle never did heal properly and to our distress, we knew she would never be able to sprint the way she used to, let alone keep up.

My heart lurched into my throat as Reedstar flew from the branch he was perched on and snatched Ebonykit before Squirreltail could get to him. Ebonykit let out a squeal, wriggling in the sly tom's grasp, as the half-infected leader bounded away. "Have a wonderful

time!" Reedstar retorted through his kit's scruff.

Squirreltail snapped her jaws at Reedstar's tail but missed only by half of a whisker-length. "No!" She wailed, and tried to run after him. But it was too late; the sound of Reedstar plunging into the water meant he was gone, and so was Ebonykit. I dashed for Squirreltail and stood in her way before she could leap the barrier to the water. "You can't get him." I croaked.

"It was probably for the best, anyway! Ebonykit was bound to become his father!" Heatherleg snapped. I shot her a glance but she had already turned away to grab Sunkit.

"Grab the medicine and the kits! Is there anyone who can't climb?" Bramblestar yowled, eyes serious. No cat bothered to answer; every cat immediately knew what he was implying. Tigerheart nosed Dovewing up the nearest tree and scrambled up behind her. In one swift leap, Nightcloud and Crowfeather jumped half way up the trunk of the tree Reedstar had perched on from either sides and clawed up to the nearest branch. Poppyheart had Sootkit in her jaws but before anyone could grab Stormkit, he hurried up the tree Tigerheart has disappeared in with Poppyheart on his tail. Mintfur and Blazefang were next to climb the tree nearest to them.

Glancing around, the only thing my ears took in were the sounds of the flesh-eaters as they tore at the barriers. My breathing started to come short and my heart thumped hard and fast. Eyes wide and tail quivering, panic began to set in. The three leaders hurried each of their warriors up the trees and didn't follow until their own Clanmates had made it up safely. I had blocked out the voices of the others and was frozen to the spot.

The remaining cats tore up the two trees and made their way up as far as they could. Flesh-eaters burst through the weak barriers within moments and let out pleased growls as their eyes set on me. Bloody saliva dripped from their jaws and the murky lake water clutched to their thin frames. The world around me was growing dizzy as the flesh-eaters closed in.

"Mudpaw!" A yowl interrupted my thoughts and brought me back to my senses. It was Squirreltail. She shoved me along and I shook my

head to gain more thought. Stumbling, I fought to clear my head. As she pushed me toward the closest tree, only one thought entered my mind: *How is she going to climb up?*

I climbed up to the first branch and expected the red she-cat to follow, but to my horror she was standing her ground at the base of the tree. "You mouse-brained furball, get up here!" I snapped, but she didn't budge. Unsheathing her claws and lashing her tail, she prepared for the flesh-eaters as they staggered toward her.

"No! Squirreltail, come on!" I yowled. I could feel the vibration of my voice deep in my chest as I screamed at her to follow. It was as if she had blocked me out; she just wouldn't listen.

With an annoyed grunt, Bramblestar dropped to the ground and grabbed the stubborn warrior by the scruff and threw his way up the tree. The flesh-eaters snapped at my tail, their milky eyes filled with their only desire: food. With my eyes locked on the torn up cats, I tried to scramble farther up the tree to a safer branch but my front paw slipped and suddenly I was surrounded by the dark lake water.

As my body sank to the mossy floor of the lake, an eerie peace closed around me. Nothing but the sound of the bubbles could be heard as they escaped my mouth and nose and rushed to the surface. For a split moment, I wanted to let the water consume me. *It could finally be over for me. I could finally end this nightmare and be with Snowpaw...*

My racing heart slowed as panic dissolved from my mind, leaving me to watch the moon become smaller and hazier until the whole world around me faded to black.

Chapter 38 - Poppyheart's P.O.V.

Feb. 17th, 2018: As you probably have noticed, the chapters don't make sense until I edit them. Sorry for any confusion! I'm still editing this book but I'm hurrying to finish! Enjoy!
*****

Mothwing had grabbed the small amount of herbs that we still possessed with the help of Blood. In the midst of all the panic, I hadn't thought it was a bad idea for the half-infected cat to be handling the medicine. Even so, Mothwing handed him the less important herbs while she took medicine like goldenrod, catmint, and comfrey.

After picking up Sootkit and watching Heatherleg snatch Sunkit, we headed for the nearest tree. Worry sparked in my chest for Stormkit, but before anyone could hurry to help him, he had already managed to start climbing the trunk.

Sootkit let out a squeal of terror as flesh-eaters began to stumble over the barriers and into the camp. With my head pounding, I took off after Stormkit and shot up the tree. Sootkit closed his eyes and let out little whimpers. "Where's Lighteningice? You said she was out for a walk... What if the monsters get her...? I want Lighteningice!" His pleas rose to a wail as I plopped myself down next to Stormkit. Trembling, Stormkit glanced at me through wide eyes, pure panic shining in his bright yellow eyes.

Glancing down to the ground, I searched the island for Mothwing, Blood, and Heatherleg with Sunkit, but they must have left the island instead of take to the trees. Setting Sootkit down beside his brother, I watched through helpless eyes as the most cats scurried up the trees and as the remaining ones took off into the lake. Mintfur and Blazefang scrambled up the other tree while Leafpool, Lionblaze, Rushpaw, and Squirrelflight took off out of the camp. They dodged the jaws of the flesh-eaters with ease and in moments

they had disappeared into the darkness.

Blackstar and Mistystar had already made their way up the tree nearest to them. My heart lurched as I realized Squirreltail wasn't climbing. She stood her ground at the base of the tree Mudpaw had climbed. As I braced myself to launch down to get Squirreltail myself, Bramblestar had beat me to it and hopped down and grasp Squirreltail in his jaws. As the large tabby tom climbed up the tree, I briefly witnessed Mudpaw slip off of the branch he clutched onto and plunged into the lake.

Unsheathing my claws, I wondered if it was worth it to endanger myself to save Mudpaw. *What about Sootkit and Stormkit? Will they be okay?* I looked up into the trees and spotted Dovewing laying against Tigerheart. The dark tabby toms eyes were hollow as Dovewing shivered next to him. "Dovewing!" I called to her. She opened her eyes and peeked over the branch above me. "What is it?" She murmured, her eyes glancing from me to the two small kits.

Looking into the pale grey she-cats eyes, I rasped, "Mudpaw fell... I have to save him. Please take care of Sootkit and Stormkit." Tigerheart and her exchanged a worried glance, but before they could argue, I dove for the lake. The last thing I heard before I plunged into the murky water was Sootkit letting out a cry.

The water was freezing now as leaf-bare was approaching. The cold shocked my body as it enclosed around me, but I forced myself to stay under to search for the brown tom. As the bubbles rose to the surface from my body entering the lake, I strained to see but under the water in the dark, it was almost impossible to see anything.

My heart began to race as I spotted air bubbles appearing from a cloud of mud. *That has to be Mudpaw!* I swam down until my ears popped from the pressure. Arms stretched out as far as they would go, I reached down until my paws hit something that was squishy, furry, and warm. My lungs began to ache as if someone was clutching onto them. I grasped Mudpaw's scruff with the last remaining air begging to be relieved and kicked off of the ground to hurry to the surface.

Gasping, my vision wavered as my head broke the surface of the lake. My body felt as if it were going to fail on me as I clawed desperately through the chilly water. Solace washed over me as my paws finally touched solid ground. Dragging the unconscious tom onto shore, I laid Mudpaw down and flopped over beside him. Panting and quivering, I stood up and shook out my pelt before crouching beside his gaping mouth. A sharp pang stabbed my heart when no air came out.

"Mudpaw, you stupid furball, get up!" I begged, shaking him vigorously. Water dripped from his jaws. Suddenly panicking, I put both front paws on his chest and pushed on it until water started to gush out of his mouth. "Come on, Mudpaw, breathe!" I whimpered as I continued to push. As I gave one final big push to his chest, his eyes shot open and he began to heave up the rest of the water. Spluttering and coughing, desperate for air, he rolled onto his stomach and wheezed.

Thank StarClan... I sighed, sitting down. Glancing around, I noticed there were flesh-eaters stumbling toward us. Fear sparked in my chest. "Mudpaw, can you run?" I mewed, turning to the young tom. He nodded and coughed a few more times before standing up. Mudpaw's legs were shaky and weak, but he was strong willed.

It was as if our only remaining friends were being torn apart before our eyes. Leafpool limped away from a pair of identical flesh-eaters, whimpering to herself. Blood was gushing from a wound in her leg. Rowanclaw was surrounded by a group of flesh-eaters and before Mudpaw and I could get to him, they had already consumed him. The dark ginger tom let out a ear piercing screech as the flesh-eaters tore him open. I turned toward the water to see Eclipse's black body washed up on the lakes' shore, her neck bitten open wide. Her bright yellow eyes, now painfully dull, stared off into nothing.

As we dashed away from the lake, I noticed Rushpaw was slashing wildly at a couple of flesh-eaters, backing into the lake. More infected cats were appearing out of the lake, going straight for the young apprentice. "Watch out, Rushpaw!" Mudpaw yowled, his voice cracking. In the midst of her struggle to survive, she didn't hear Mudpaw's desperate call. Flesh-eaters grabbed at her from

behind and took her under the water. As she let out a squeal, I had to turn away from the gruesome sight.

Warriors everywhere were scattered as they tried to avoid the deadly bites of the undead.

"We need to get out of here, Poppyheart! I'm sure they'll find us one way or another!" Mudpaw gasped, backing into me. I hesitated. *How can we just leave our Clanmates?*

"Let's just find a tree or high ground and stay there until things calm down. We don't have to flee entirely from the territories!" I replied to the young tom and with a curt nod, we glanced around for a safe place to stay. As we searched, I spotted Bramblestar and Squirrelflight battling a growing group of flesh-eaters. The leader must have left the camp after I dove into the lake. Letting out a screech, some of the flesh-eaters turned and began to head for us. "Are you mouse-brained? Now they're going to come for us!" Mudpaw snapped.

"Bramblestar, Squirrelflight, run!" I yowled after them. Bramblestar whipped around and nudged Squirrelflight to move.

Pounding toward us, Bramblestar didn't stop to talk. "Forget the others, we can come back later. We will get killed here!" The thick tom panted, trotting by. Without any real direction, we took off toward the river. I spotted Lionblaze off to the side and without a word, he began to follow us.

And with that, we were on the run. Guilt churned my stomach as I realized I may never see Mothwing, Sootkit, Stormkit, or any of the Clan cats ever again.

Chapter 39 - Heatherleg's + Blood's P.O.V.

Feb 17th, 2018: Bare with me. The plot is changing and will be confusing if you read past this! I'm working hard to create a new ending! Thanks for your patience!

*****

I splashed out of the water in fear that something was going to grab at my legs. Sunkit was still grasped in my jaws and as I crawled onto shore, anxiety prickled under my pelt when she didn't start panting right away. Within moments, though, she began to splutter. *I thought I told her to close her mouth and hold her breath?*

As I scanned the ground near the old ShadowClan territory we came from, I noticed there were no familiar cats around. Sunkit wriggled in my jaws, "Let me down! I can't stand being held like this as if I'm still a moon old!" Sighing, I let her drop to the ground. "Stay near me." I muttered, padding toward the sound of rushing water. *Maybe there are cats near the river...* Being alone with only a small kit wasn't something I was looking forward to.

Following the shoreline near the thick pine trees, I aimed for the small Twoleg den. Sunkit trekked close beside me. Birds took off with frightened calls as a sudden yowl came from just beyond the small Twoleg den. I spotted the slender shape of Ivypool's white-and-silver pelt from under a couple of trees beside the Twoleg den. "Come on, we have to help!" Grabbing Sunkit by the scruff again, I took off as fast as I could to help the she-cat.

By the time I got to the patch of even grass that the den was on, Ivypool was seemingly giving up. Two hungry flesh-eaters snarled at her. Her hind leg was twisted at an awkward angle, and I realized she must have fallen from the tree she stood under. Ivypool was backed into the tree with her lip curled in a nasty snarl. Though she hid it well, I could briefly see the dread glistening in

her eyes.

"Stay here, Sunkit! And don't move until I say!" I hissed, dropping her into a bush. Taking off, I bounded toward the two flesh-eaters as they closed in on the warrior. With a heroic leap, I landed on the back of the one closest to me and clawed at its face. It let out a shocked shriek and whipped around, trying to snap at my legs. With one swift movement, I snapped its neck and let it collapse under me. Though it's jaws continued to chomp at me, its body could no longer move. When I turned back to face the other one, Ivypool had already started to claw at it but her swipes were weakening.

Charging, I threw myself at the torn up cat and shoved it to the ground. "Come on, let's go!" I puffed, nudging her away before turning toward the bush where Sunkit was hiding. I could see her golden muzzle peeking out of the leaves. "Sunkit, follow me!" At my call, she dashed out as fast as she could and hurried past Ivypool and I.

"I would never say this unless I meant it, but... Thank you." Ivypool murmured as she leaned on me for support. Sunkit kept running with an occasional glance over her shoulder to make sure I was still there. "Don't mention it." I replied solemnly. Taking a peek behind me, my heart lurched as the flesh-eater I had knocked down was already coming for us again.

Ivypool noticed the flesh-eater and tried to hurry her pace. "Take your time, flesh-eaters aren't very fast," I reassured her. Her dark blue eyes were glossy with pain but she refused to stop speeding up.

The flesh-eater didn't give up and even as Ivypool managed to keep up a good speed, I realized it slowly was gaining on us. "Keep going, I'm going to have to kill it or it will catch our tails." I sighed, leaving Ivypool to limp on her own.

Turning to face the ugly monster, I let out a snarl and unsheathed my claws. I sprinted toward it and sprung onto its back. It collapsed under my weight just like the other did and a sickening snap sent chills down my spine as one of its legs fractured. Deciding that was enough to slow it down, I hurried back to Ivypool's side with a brief

peek over my shoulder. To my relief, the flesh-eater had barely moved a tail-length by the time I had reached the injured warrior.

Panting from the effort, Ivypool leaned gratefully on me again. "Do-do you know if Dovewing is okay?" She breathed. *Who's Dovewing again?* I wondered. Unable to even remember who the she-cat was, I gave her an honest reply, "I really don't know... I'm sure she is safe."

Sunkit waited patiently for us to catch up to her. "Let's head for the river. I'm sure there are others there." I suggested. Ivypool didn't respond, only continued to limp on.

"I hope Reedstar doesn't hurt Ebonykit..." Sunkit murmured. "Ebonykit was so nice. Quiet, but very kind." I wasn't sure how to answer her comment.

The night rolled on with a chilly breeze blowing into our faces. Clouds had blown over the stars, making our ancestors not visible. *I wonder if Lighteningice, Cloudjaw, and the others we have lost are watching us... Do they feel bad for us, or do they still feel their own pain?* I wondered as I searched for the stars that once glittered proudly in the dark blue sky.

(Blood's P.O.V.)

After hopping across the stepping stones in the river, I set down the herbs on dry land. There was a group of cats running toward us from the marsh by the island, but they were too far away to pin-point who they were. Off in the distance toward the pine trees, I could see a cat struggling with two flesh-eaters. I had to insist to myself that someone closer to them would help because my legs couldn't possibly bring me there fast enough to help. Mothwing had dropped the rest of the herbs beside the ones I had after following me across the river. She took in a deep breath and looked at the open territory. Sadness flashed in her amber eyes.

A herd of flesh-eaters were approaching the island. It was as if we were attracting them with our yowls and battle cries. I nudged

Mothwing out of her daze and indicated with my tail that there were only more to come. Though my tongue was numbed now from the medicine I was given, it was still painful to rest the tip of my tongue on the roof of my mouth as I spoke.

"We can only wait here. I can see Bramblestar coming with some cats. If we have to, we will have to fight them off." Mothwing stated. Dipping my head, I looked to the cat who was fighting with two flesh-eaters. Squinting, I noticed there was another cat running toward the cat in trouble. *I hope they make it in time!*

Mothwing sniffed the air and grabbed the herbs. Trotting away, she disappeared behind a thorn bush that overhung the stream. As I waited patiently for Bramblestar and his small group to approach us, a drop of rain hit my pelt. Within heartbeats, thick rain was coming down fast and hard. Mothwing stayed in the den until Bramblestar crossed the river. "Blood!" Poppyheart gasped as she leaped onto the other side of the river. "Where's Mothwing?" I nodded to the thorn bush where the golden she-cat popped out of.

"Oh thank StarClan, I thought you two were goners!" The tortoiseshell she-cat purred, following the other medicine cat into the den. Lionblaze, Squirrelflight, Mudpaw, and Bramblestar dipped their heads wearily to me. I shuffled my paws awkwardly. *I'm still alive... I wish I was treated the same as any other cat.*

Bramblestar looked toward the pine trees and flicked his tail. The tall tom let out a growl. "There are more to come," He snarled and then added louder, "And it looks like your ally, Heatherleg, is bringing Ivypool to us."

Poppyheart rushed out of the den and strained to see the warrior Bramblestar was talking about. The rain made it harder to see in the dark, but sure enough, two dark shapes were heading toward us. A smaller shape was in front, too. "Sunkit is with her! StarClan, thank you!" She breathed. As we watched, all of us quickly noticed Ivypool was leaning on Heatherleg for support.

"It looks as if she has a broken leg. Search for bindweed; Blood, make yourself useful and find two thick sticks." Mothwing ordered. I hurried off, glad to be asked to help.

Sniffing at the edges of the small stream that trickled away from the river, I searched until I found a few thick sticks that were about the length of my hind leg. Holding four in my mouth for them to choose from, I trotted back to where the others were waiting.

By then, Ivypool was sprawled out on her side with her injured leg exposed. I dropped the few sticks at Mothwing's paws. "Thank you, these are perfect." She nodded to me and began to work. Giving one to Ivypool to hold in her mouth, Poppyheart then held her leg in place while Mothwing tied the two firmly to her leg with the weed around it as tight as it would go. It was a quick process, but Ivypool's eyes were dull with pain. She didn't make a moan, though. *Such a strong-willed warrior.* I thought as I gazed at the beautiful she-cat.

"Let's get you into our old medicine den so you can stay dry. I still have some poppy seeds, too. It will help with the pain." Mothwing mewed, helping the young warrior up. Meanwhile, Heatherleg was curled around Sunkit under the protection of a tree. Sunkit looked to be sleeping as Heatherleg licked the kit's fur to warm her.

Bramblestar and Lionblaze had their heads bowed as they spoke to each other quietly. The two talked for what seemed to be seasons before Bramblestar rose and announced his decision. "We will stay here until things calm down by the island. We can only hope the ones who stayed in the trees are okay until it is safe enough for us to go down there to help them out. For now, Lionblaze, Mudpaw, and I will hunt and bring back what we can for us to share. In the meantime, save your strength... We will need it when those flesh-eaters find us."

Chapter 40 - Lilypatch's P.O.V.

Holy shit I didnt mean for this to end up like The Walking Dead .___.

A flesh-eater stumbled toward Mothwing who was helping Tigerheart out. He seemed to have a small gash in his leg, as if he had fallen on something sharp. He clenched his teeth as tightly as he could with his eyes squeezed shut.

I charged for the flesh-eater, dove for it and smashed straight into its side. It let out a howl as the air was forced out of its stomach and blood was practically squeezed from its mouth.

Mothwing's head flew over her shoulder to see what the noise was. Shock filled her bright yellow eyes and as she realized I had saved her, she dipped her head in thanks. I didn't do much to say your welcome, only circled the two as Mothwing worked on Tigerheart's leg.

"The scent of his blood is attracting them. Hurry," I hissed over my shoulder. My fur was standing on end in fear and anxiousness.

After a while of a few attacks from flesh-eaters and groaning from Tigerheart, Mothwing confirmed we could leave. As she had finished up the wound, Leafpool had joined in to she her a few tricks.

I spotted Poppyheart, Mudpaw and a few others dashing off up to ShadowClan's old territory. "There! Poppyheart is taking a group down RiverClan territory! Come on!" I gasped over my shoulder.

"Leafpool, help Tigerheart walk. Tigerheart, keep your leg up. Lilypatch lead the way while I take the rear with the herbs." Mothwing ordered. Her ears were scanning for any sounds of flesh-eaters. My heart pounded and I trotted ahead.

"Wait for us, Lilypatch!" Leafpool growled and I slowed down. "Sorry, I'm just worried and anxious..." I muttered.

The night went on agonizingly slow. Flesh-eaters with their gaping jaws and blind eyes had tried to get at Tigerheart, but I had come to the rescue.

"Poppyheart! Mudpaw! Wait up!" I yowled, using my voice from deep inside my lungs. They didn't seem to hear me. "I'll run ahead and get them to wait, try to hurry up!" I called over my shoulder. The three nodded but didn't look anything more than impressed.

I dashed forward as fast as I could, charging toward the group until something grabbed at my ankles.

I don't know what is was and I never thought about it, but as I tripped, I rolled down to the river. My head was shoved underwater. I used all my breath trying to scream for help and as my lungs began to beg for air, I started trying to get my head up. Panic settled in and I used every bit of air to try and get up and scream.

My eyes shot around the river but nothing there would help me. I tried and tried but my brain decided to try to breathe in air.

All it got was water.

Whatever was holding me down was suddenly shoved off of me. My head shot out of the water without me saying so and trying to take in air, I began to choke.

"Cough, Lilypatch, just cough it up." Mothwing soothed. I coughed and coughed until my lungs ached. *Sweet, sweet air...*

I took in as much as much air as I could. In the corner of my eye I saw Bramblestar beating on Reedstar.

Bramblestar pinned the black, selfish tom down. Reedstar hissed in his face, spatting all over him. With his scrawny arms, he slashed at the leaders eyes and let out a huge growl.

"Go on, I'll catch up!" Bramblestar yowled. I took in as many breaths

as I could as we began to run off.

I pushed Mothwing away as she tried to help me walk and trotted forward. "Where are we going?" I muttered.

"We're going to walk the Thunderpath until we find somewhere to stay. Hopefully - even though it sounds stupid - we'll run into a Twoleg. They might take us somewhere safe." Lionblaze wheezed, holding his leg up and trying to catch up to me as I started to speed up.

"I guess that's a good plan." I murmured, my voice threatening to brake. I began to wheeze which was quickly fixed by coughing it away.

Just as soon as we had started padding toward the Thunderpath, it seemed to come to us in mere heartbeats. The river was coming from under the Thunderpath with a large hole with rectangular stones lining the edge of it. Stones protected the edge of the Thunderpath to keep anything from falling off and into the river.

Raising my tail for the others to halt, I took the lead and checked out the Thunderpath. A totalled monster laid in the ditch, smoke twirling from it's head. The glass eyes had no light and no Twoleg was in it's stomach. Not a live one anyway.

Twolegs stumbled around the monster, groaning with their arms limp and practically dangling from their pale skin. Their fur on their heads was knotted and bloody.

They were shuffling the opposite way we were planning on going. "Don't make any noise, they're going the opposite way we're going. Let's go." I hissed. Bramblestar ran up to the group just as I had turned around. He dipped his head in agreement.

"Did you take care of the *problem*?" I muttered and he nodded. Poppyheart and Mudpaw took the lead while Bramblestar and I stuck to the back.

I felt awkward standing beside him, he was at least a head taller than me.

"You're tall." I purred.

Chapter 41 - Mudpaw's P.O.V.

[image]

Note: This chapter is Mudpaw's dream and only that. (The past few dreams he has had is exactly what this chapter will explain). Enjoy~

I woke up on an endless Thunderpath, the black ground stretching on for what seemed to be forever. The forest was on either side of the Thunderpath, but as I padded to go into them, I noticed gorges were there, making me second guess about trying to get across. It looked like it went down into the infinity.

When I looked up from one of the gorges, a white she-cat stood there. She was smaller than me, and agonizingly familiar.

Her piercing purple eyes stared up at me silently. Her fur was fluffy like a fresh layer of snow and her eyes were big and bright.

My heart felt like it was in my throat, like a ball of emotion was stuck there and refused to go down. The she-cat's scent made me feel calmer, relieving my anxiety. The she-cat made me happier.

I blinked silently at the familiar she-cat and just breathed in her scent. She made me feel like I was back in the LightClan apprentice den.

Suddenly, the adorable, wonderful little she-cat twitched fiercely. Her eyes switched from her welcoming purple eyes to a white that was as white as her snow colored fur. The color of her eye was pushed away by the white from her pupil to the lining of her eye.

I flinched and my eyes widened; I wanted to ask her if she was alright, but I found no voice.

Her eyes then switched permanently from purple to white as if she

were blinded. Then she twitched more than the first time, happening like a seizure.

She made a gurgling sound and suddenly blood was pouring out of her mouth. A puddle of blood laid at her tiny paws, staining them a rusted color. Rapidly, her body began to decay, fur falling out like leaves falling from trees.

She stopped convulsing and took a shaky step toward me.

The feeling of welcoming from her quickly went to alarm. Not only because the mysterious she-cat turned into a flesh-eater, but also because she was Snowpaw.

Guilt, love, fear, anger and shock welcomed me as her eyes no longer did. My jaw dropped and I took a step back.

I took the step back, coming closer to her. I smiled a crooked smile, my skin feeling warm as if I was going to faint and my heart fluttered. I laid out a paw for her and touched her head just behind her missing ear. I then found my voice and murmured, "Lets get you home, you're nearly frozen..."

I swallowed as her mouth opened to try and grab my arm as it vibrated in a mixture of fear and relief. I wanted her to chase me; I felt like she was still alive suddenly. We used to chase each other as kits and early apprentice-hood. *Please keep chasing me....*

My breath came short, her face suddenly flashing to one of the days when we played together, her face lit up in happiness and her eyes wide. It stayed, but sudden flashes came as if my body was warning me. "I don't care if you're contagious... I would kiss you even if you were dead. You're mine. I'll always love you, my dear, dear Snowpaw. They'll never take us alive, we'll be okay." I breathed, touching my nose to hers.

I went around her to stand beside her. She hadn't grown since the last time I had seen her, but I had. Her blind eyes traveled over to me, using her ears and nose as a guide. I smiled down at her.

I'll never let her go... She can stay in my dreams every night, as long as

she stays with me. She's frozen, but that's alright...

"I'll never let you freeze... without me. I'll be here for you, Snowpaw..."

The music video I am providing is some of the lines he says, read this then listen to it! [Only till 1:05 is the song I'm talking about xD !]

Chapter 42 - Silverberry's P.O.V.

"Shadesoul," I breathed as I watched over the departing Clans. "You know this is *your* kins' fault, don't you?" The grey she-cat shot her head toward me and narrowed her yellow eyes. "This is the Twolegs' fault, not my kin!" She hissed, her fur sticking up.

"Your kin has been doing things against the Warrior Code for seasons. Your mother and father both were murderers and their siblings had always stolen prey from other Clans. Then you had a kit with the DarkClan warrior, Mousefoot. Reedstar was never supposed to happen. Your kin was punished by the infection. Your kin killed many of the lives in the Clans, thanks to your rebellious actions," I corrected her, my ears laid back flat and my eyes narrowed.

"I did no such thing! It was love, and not just some lousy Clan borders and Codes were going to keep me from seeing him," Shadesoul muttered as she stood up to leave.

"But even so, you must want to change something. You know deep down Reedstar was a mistake to the Clans. I know how to fix this, Shadesoul." I meowed, swallowing in hope.

"I know he was a mistake, but he is my kit and I can't just *kill* him." Stated Shadesoul. Her eyes wandered away as she faced the East.

"We don't have to kill him, we will go into the past and warn Mousefoot away. Your relationship made the Clans suffer, but it doesn't have to be like this anymore." I reasoned. Standing up, I approached the grey she-cat.

"The fate of many lies in your paws," I whispered.

Before I could go, she called after me, "Wait, I'll do it. If the Clans get to survive and go about their normal, stupid days, than so be it.

How do we do this?" I looked over my shoulder and looked deep into her eyes and dipped my head.

Shadesoul was obviously irritated about doing good, since she had always been a rebel like the rest of her kin.

"But, my whole kin has done bad... Why will Reedstar be the key to fixing the world?" Shadesoul asked, cocking her head to the side in confusion.

"He's the cat that did it over for all of us." I mewed simply. I widened my eyes and stared deep into Shadesoul's yellow eyes and suddenly, we were in a dense forest. It was like Shadesoul was leaving the Clans to see Mousefoot.

The sun was gone and the moon was out fully, the stars twinkling above. No moaning or yowls came from deep within the forest.

Shadesoul was no where to be seen, and as I spun around in search for the snarky she-cat, I noticed the past Shadesoul was with Mousefoot already. Tails entwined and nuzzling each other, the dead Shadesoul suddenly entered the past Shadesoul's body. *There she is...* I smiled, ducking down as the forbidden couple opened their eyes.

"Mousefoot... There is something I have to tell you, and you have to believe me no matter how crazy and stupid it sounds!" Shadesoul gasped, backing away.

"As much as I love you, I can't be your mate. If I have Reedstar - er, I mean any future kits with you, the Clans will be punished for it! We have to go back to our normal, yet stupid, boring and pointless, lives like the rest. It's for the best." Shadesoul mewed, her eyes bright and serious.

"Reedstar? Punishment? You *are* crazy... You just want to have that Cedar-snitch as your mate instead of me. You must've gotten in trouble for it and you want to blame it on me, huh?" Mousefoot gasped, standing and taking a step back. "No, Mousefoot, it isn't like that. I've seen the future, it's true! *Please*-" Shadesoul begged but Mousefoot had enough of it.

"Enough! This is a load of dirt! You could've just told me straight on that this wasn't going to work instead of foolishly and selfishly lying to me! Goodbye, Shadesoul." He hissed as he rushed away. He never looked back.

The ground beneath our paws begun to shake and our bodies faded until we were back in StarClan.

"Great, now Reedstar will never be born, Snowpaw, Venomsoul, Birdfeather and many other cats that did not deserve to die will not die as they had when Reedstar existed." I panted, suddenly excited.

The grassy ground that was beneath our feet in StarClan gave way to a hole that sparkled and they showed us the scattering Clans.

"Why aren't they back to normal?" Shadesoul growled. Anger was starting to boil up inside of her.

"Just wait... It'll all play out." I whispered.

Chapter 43 - Blood's P.O.V.

You all should know my computer is busted, my moms is also busted, so I am using the little time I have to be on my aunts. I'll try to update whenever I can; I hope you guys understand and I will be on a few times! Have a great summer, excuse any mistakes in any book, and make sure to vote on anything you like :)

P_A83 out!

Ivypool came back eventually with a puny starling dangling from her muzzle. "Good catch!" I praised with a look of delight in my eyes.

"Thanks," She mewed. "I wonder how the others are doing..." She mumbled as she tore into the starling. I ripped off a wing and plucked the feathers before digging in.

"Probably... not so well." I sighed. *No sense in getting her hopes up...*

I licked my lips after the wing and got the sudden urge to fluff out my fur and groom it... but with the herbs on my fur, I didn't dare do it.

We stood up after Ivypool buried the remains of the starling and headed toward the WindClan moor. "Should we go to the big Twoleplace over there? It might have shelters or something." I suggested quietly. My tongue wasn't hurting now, it was numbed almost completely.

We started hurrying through WindClans moor beside the shimmering lake; the screams had faded to the sound of flesh-eaters as their voices traveled effortlessly across the lake.

The moon was on its way down now, the reflection was in the center of the perfectly calm lake. Stars began to fade, the sky began

to brighten, my paws became soaked from the dew and just as I turned around, my foot for caught in a rabbit hole.

I clenched my teeth to keep my scream at a minimum; yowling in pain wouldn't be the best for either of us.

"Are you alright?" Ivypool gasped, halting and turning tail to come to me. "Ugh..." I muttered, forcing myself to look at it. I tried to move my toes, but I was pretty sure my toes had stayed in it while my leg kept going.

I let out a shaky breath and nodded. *I'm strong! Keep it together...*

"N-no. I'm fine. Keep moving before we get caught," I stuttered Ivypool hesitated and as I lifted my paw, pain shot through me so excruciating, I almost fainted.

I squeezed my eyes shut for a heartbeat then continued with the running - more like limping.

Ivypool kept at my pace, her eyes sizing me up. I forced myself to look forward and to forget the pain. *Forget it... Be a real tom and fight the pain!*

*****

The pain was still signaling my brain as we slowly gained speed. We were just passing a small Thunderpath then, now into a field that had trees to the West and two Thunderpaths separating to the East.

Small dots were rushing up the Thunderpath. "Is that..." Ivypool whispered, pausing just as we got to the bigger Thunderpath.

A large patrol of cats came up, Leafpool, Poppyheart, Sootkit, Bramblestar, Lilypatch, Tigerheart, Mothwing, Mudpaw, Squirreltail and Lionblaze all came to us. "Great StarClan, you two are alright!" Mothwing gasped, rushing over.

"Not exactly... Blood got his foot caught in a rabbit hole. It doesn't look too good." Ivypool commented. She gave me a warm, sympathetic look. She was always serious, that wasn't like her.

"We should get that fixed up. I'm sure we have plenty of time before any flesh-eaters fine us." Poppyheart insisted, padding over. Mothwing nodded, agreeing with Poppyheart.

Just as Mothwing examined my paw, the ground began to shake. It was a small rumble, but as we looked around, it intensified greatly in mere heartbeats. "What's going on?!" Sootkit squealed and suddenly, we all were thrown to the ground. My paw was squished under my body and I let out a howl.

"What's happening?! Is it a ground-shake?!" Mudpaw gasped as he tried to stand. He was only thrown back down as soon as he got up.

Just as the ground started to shake even more, the ground began to give away and suddenly I blacked out completely.

I woke to an alley way and my heart lurched. I blinked away the looming fog that swirled around my paws and stood up. My legs were shaky and weak, a fading memory of scary, moaning flesh-eating cats flashing in my memories, threatening to haunt me for moons upon moons.

My fur was the way it was before, no wounds and my paw was as good as a new-born kits'.

Just as quickly as I realized I was alright, I forgot about it and went on to my day. Something itched at the back of my mind, reminding me of a horrific time, and a beautiful grey she-cat whos name just wouldn't come to mind.

This isn't the end! I have a few more chapters of Mudpaw's P.O.V, Sunkit's P.O.V, and Poppyheart's P.O.V. coming up!

Chapter 44 - Mudpaw's P.O.V.

Still to come: Sunkit's P.O.V. and Poppyheart's P.O.V.!! Plus, these three cats P.O.V. is theirs because they're the only ones who remeber the flesh-eaters.

Note: These may be shorter than you hoped for! Sorry D:

Just as quickly as I was knocked out cold, I was woken up in LightClan. The sun was shining brightly and no one was in their dens. I padded out quickly, my heart thumping in relief and sudden hope. Crystalstar was chatting up a storm with Lilypatch and pure happiness filtered the warm camp.

Patrols came in with their mouths filled with prey. No flesh-eaters, no fear.

My body wasn't terribly skinny and my fur was clean like I had just cleaned it. My eyes weren't heavy and I wasn't filled with a deep, utter sorrow that seemed to replace the happy in my heart.

The world faded away as my eyes caught with Snowpaw's. *I should've treasured it more with her... I lost her and I don't want it to happen again!*

Her shiny, fluffy white coat was blowing in the breeze. Her short legs hopped gladly over to the fresh-kill pile and dropped it down. She turned around and raced toward me. Her nose touched mine and a spark was sent through me. Deerpaw and Spikepaw didn't even matter now, as much as I had missed them. Snowpaw seemed to mean more to me.

Her purple eyes were no longer white and blind, but filled with sight that can see from what seemed to be tail-lengths away. Her eyes shown brightly like a purple moon and squeaked, "Mudpaw! I missed you! I got a squirrel, did you see?"

I was so astonished by her looks and bubbly personality that I didn't even follow her as she bounded away.

"Come on! It's *huge*!" She purred.

Chapter 45 - Sunkit's P.O.V.

Still Poppyheart's P.O.V. to come!

I woke up to a golden stomach in my face. I sneezed lightly as fur stuck up my nose. My heart suddenly fluttered, as if it knew something I wasn't catching onto.

Ambersun was snoring peacefully, her stomach rising and falling slowly and majestically. I hopped up and spun around.

"Heatherleg!" I screamed, rushing out of the den and running through the camp. My mind was whirling! *Am I really home again?* I wondered as I left the nursery.

Leopardstar was sunning in the camp and Darkheart was chatting with Venomsoul. Heatherleg was showing her kits, Birchpaw, Timberpaw and Leafpaw tricks and tips in fighting. I rushed over as fast as my stubby legs would take me.

"Heatherleg! Oh my StarClan, did you see?" I gasped, my mouth open wide. I couldn't stay still at all from excitement and relief. "What is it Sunkit?" Heatherleg purred.

"The flesh-eaters are gone! We can go back to normal! Leopardstar isn't dead and she isn't crazy! Darkheart's still here! Check Darkheart for any bites, he's the one who caused the flesh-eaters to eat us all!" I squealed. I could feel my fur ruffling up as I spoke, pure fear flooding my golden gaze.

"Flesh-eaters? Eat us all? Sunkit, that must've been one crazy dream you had there." Heatherleg mewed. *She doesn't believe me! I'm telling the truth! How can she not believe me?!*

"No! Please, believe me! They ate all the Clans and you and I were the last cats in DarkClan and Poppyheart was the last of SpiritClan

and Mudpaw and some others were still alive in LightClan!" I explained, panting, "Then we met up with Blood and Eclipse and these other Clan cats from ThunderClan and some other Clans and we almost all died and now all of a sudden I'm back here! Darkheart's going to kill us all! Get Pebblefur to check him out, please!" I pleaded, my voice getting louder as I spoke.

Heatherleg gave me a look and Pebblefur trotted out of the medicine den. "What's going on?" She mewed with her eyes narrowed and ears up straight.

"Sunkit's gone crazy. Is there medicine for *that?*" Timberpaw snarled. For a medicine cat apprentice, he sure didn't act like one. He was a rude brat!

"I'm telling the truth! Darkheart's infected!" I squeaked and Pebblefur gave me a kind look. "He isn't infected and you're not crazy, Sunkit. What you saw that seems like a realistic dream, was the past that was changed."

Heatherleg gave Pebblefur a look of bewilderment and I just sat down, full blown amazed. *I knew it was real...*

Leopardstar padded over. Her eyes were hard and serious like always. "What's all the commotion and yelling about?" She hissed, her long tail lashing.

"I saw a vision of deadly, infected cats from Silverberry. It's too long to explain, though Sunkit did a pretty good job for me." Pebblefur mewed.

All I could really think about was: *Does Heatherleg still love me the way she did before?*

Chapter 46 - Poppyheart's P.O.V. (ENDING)

My eyes fluttered open to a nice, warm, welcoming sunlight cascading over my body. I sat up, my head fuzzy with fading pictures and memories that seemed to be a dream playing over and over again of death, blood and rotting cats.

I looked around and remembered blacking out in a totally different part of territory with no other SpiritClan cats and only a few DarkClan cats. LightClan had a bit more than a few, but not many. Something told me that it wasn't a dream. Dreams are what you expect to happen.

I ducked out of the medicine den, happiness passing in the breeze as patrols came back with their mouths filled with prey. No chilly breeze like my head remembered. It was greenleaf, the beginning of it.

The name Reedstar popped into my head and I tilted my head to the side. *Where's Reedstar?* I wondered, looking around the camp.

No sign of him, only Cloudjaw and Whitetooth purring with Birdfeather leaning on Whitetooth.

Birdfeather... Cloudjaw... Whitetooth? They're... alive? A painful memory of the three dying entered my mind and I swallowed. *This is all too good to be true...*

I rushed up to Cloudjaw and looked behind him and around him. "Where's Reedstar?" I puffed. "Reedstar? I'm the only leader around here, Poppyheart," Cloudjaw purred. "You know that."

"I'm the deputy of course! Do you have amnesia or something?" Whitetooth mewed with his eyes narrowed.

"You- leader? Deputy? That can't be right. You two are dead, *all* of

you were dead... except me! The flesh-eaters infected us all and Reedstar tried to take the power... Cloudjaw, you were deputy, Whitetooth you were just a warrior and then you both died... I know it isn't a dream, it's too heart wrenching and real to be *fake*!" I gasped, taking a step back.

The two exchanged glances and within heartbeats, cats were surrounding me. My heart pounded and my body burned in embarrassment.

Before the two could argue or even say anything, a mew of a familiar cat came from behind me.

I turned around and saw a silver cat, Silverberry, behind me. She smiled and mewed, her mew echoing around the camp as silence pierced the air, "The rebel in the shade changed her ways, for the reed will no longer sway. No more unnecessary deaths will come from this selfish leader, whom no longer exists."

I swallowed and realized 'the reed' was Reedstar. *His mother changed what happened in the past...*

I was delighted at the same time as heartbroken. Reedstar may have been selfish, rude and a jerk, but deep down, he was just lonely. Now he doesn't feel anything. Not that he did before.

Hallo guys, P_A83 here :)

I hope you liked Reedstar's Selfishness! I'm not sure what I'm going to write next, if you have any ideas, just comment it or PM me :)

*I'll try to think of one on my own, but if I don't, oh well ^_^*

Have a good summer everyone!

P_A83 out!

Facts!

-The reason why the cats that got killed and turned and stayed in the bodies was because Silverberry never allowed them in StarClan because she knew they'd go back to the Clans some day and never remember the apocalypse and die by their expected deaths.

-Reedstar and Heatherleg, Dawnclaw and Venomsoul are related, meaning he killed his half-brother.

-Ivypool and Blood were originally going to become mates. Ivypool had one last dream after the world was fixed and that was her two immune kits with Blood - whom she doesn't remember.

-Mousefoot had told tales about Shadesoul to the kits and how she was crazy to believe that the kit he wanted to have with her would send the Clans into utter punishment and dismay.

-In Chapter 39 when Heatherleg hears a voice it is actually not Sunkit but it was her hearing voices - adding to the fact that she was slowly going insane.

-The reason Mudpaw, Sunkit and Poppyheart were the ones I chose to be the last three Point Of Views of the book is because they were the only ones to remember the apocalypse.

(There are only a few, but I thought you should know!)

Hope you guys liked Reedstar's Selfishness! Any ideas for a new book, let me know!